

#1519 International Fascist Movement on the Move

[00:00:00] Intro 10-8-22

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left Podcast*, in which we shall take a look at the recent elections in Italy, Brazil, and Sweden, where far right parties are either taking power or looking to maintain it, as well as the parallels to our own politics, including moderate conservatives helping to legitimize the far right while de-legitimizing elections themselves.

Clips today are from the *Mehdi Hassan Show*, *the Jacobin Show*, *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *In The Thick*, *Democracy Now!*, and *The Muckrake Political Podcast*, with additional members-only clips from the *Jacobin Show* and *The Rachel Maddow Show*.

And by the way, the midterms are right around the corner, so be sure to check out the show notes. For our midterms minute section, highlighting key races across the country and how to get involved. Today's focus is on the toss-up Senate races and those leaning precariously Democratic or Republican. Remember, voting is not enough, so get [00:01:00] involved and help get out the vote.

And stay tuned at the end of the show for a couple of examples of how small misunderstandings can result in wildly wrong conclusions. In this case, particularly, about racial and cultural segregation.

Fascist Brothers of Italy Party takes power in Italy - The Mehdi Hassan Show - Air Date 10-2-22

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: In the wake of last week's Italian elections, Giorgia Meloni leader of the far right Neofascist Brothers of Italy party is poised to become that country's next prime Minister, and Republicans here in the US have been falling over themselves to congratulate her on her win and identify themselves with the neofascist. Here are former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Republican Senator Tom Cotton, both congratulating Meloni as a fellow conservative, apparently, and

when an old speech of Meloni's decrying financial speculators, yes, financial speculators -- I think we all know who she's referring to there -- went viral in right-wing circles. Republican Senator Ted Cruz tweeted "Spectacular." Even though his own wife is a managing director at what some would [00:02:00] say is the grand champion of actual financial speculators, Goldman Sachs.

My favorite right-wing tweet about Meloni, though, was this one from an employee of Breitbart, who decided to dabble in a bit of identity politics suggesting, "You're for the patriarchy if you dare criticize Italy's first female prime minister" and also tweeting hilariously "Calling her Mussolini just because she's Italian is racist", to which I responded, "How about comparing her to Mussolini because she has praised Mussolini, currently echoes Mussolini, and runs a party that both includes Mussolini's heirs and is itself an heir to the Italian social movement, which was formed by supporters of Mussolini in 1946. How about that?"

By the way, did you see how I managed to squeeze all that relevant biographical information about Meloni into 140 characters or whatever the Twitter limit is these days? Because a lot of mainstream media pieces running into the hundreds or thousands of words weren't able to do that, sadly. And I'll be honest, I expected the Republican right to embrace Meloni. They are at best, [00:03:00] to quote the president, semi fascist themselves these days.

What's been so depressing is to see so much of the "liberal media," the mainstream media, the MSM, giving a pass to Meloni, or playing down her and her party's fascist roots, focusing more on the fact that she's female and less on the fact that she's, you know, fascistic. That has been deeply, deeply depressing to see. There was the Washington Post headline: "Giorgia Meloni could become Italy's first female prime minister. Here's what to know."

Now here's what you wouldn't know from that headline. You wouldn't know that she has ties to fascism. But hey, she's female. There was the headline in the Financial Times. We could pull that up as well. "Likely victory for Italian right portends risks, but no lurch into extremism." Don't worry. No lurch to extremism, even though they just elected card-carrying [00:04:00] extremists.

But still hers is a heartwarming tale, isn't it? I kid you not. This was the tweet from Politico Europe. Let's pull up the tweet from Politico Europe. "In July, 1992, a 15-year-old school girl rang the doorbell at a local branch of the Youth Front, a far right movement in Rome, and asked to be let in. This weekend that same school girl could become Italy's next prime minister."

Wow. Forget the fascism. Forget the fascism. Focus on the inspiration there.

Then there was this op-ed in the New York Times: Giorgia Meloni is extreme, but she's no tyrant." Well, that's all right then. At least she's not a tyrant.

There was this op-ed in the Atlantic, which argued that "the most immediate concern about Italy's new government is not any threat to the country's democratic institution, still less a return to fascism."

Did you notice a trend yet? It's not as bad as you think. This isn't really fascism. Stop the hyperbole and hysteria. [00:05:00] It'll all be fine. In fact, I couldn't help but think that I've seen these headlines, these hot takes before. Remember the Washington Post op-ed on the eve of the 2016 US presidential election with this headline? "Calm down, we'll be fine no matter who wins." Oh yeah. Remember the New York Times op-ed with this headline the month before the 2020 presidential election? "There will be no Trump coup."

So look, I have a humble suggestion for many of my colleagues in the "liberal media." How about in the year 2022, we stop playing down, minimizing, whitewashing people who literally say or do fascist things, people who want to overturn elections and ban Muslims. People who, as in the case of Italy's next prime minister, spout great replacement theory while running a political party that has a direct connection back to Benito Mussolini himself.

Italian Fascism w David Broder - Jacobin Show - Air Date 9-30-22

DAVID BRODER: Broadly, Fratelli d'Italia is a party that centers its message on a very harsh nationalist identity politics, [00:06:00] the defense of the natural family, at times in the past that has, even recent past, that's involved things like great replacement theory, claiming that the left plans ethnic substitution of Whites in alliance with speculators like George Soros and this kind of thing. But in this campaign, it basically mixed some of that kind of identity politics with the message that actually on the economy and on foreign policy, it won't be too disruptive in terms of who votes for them. Basically, I think it's kind of too easy to sort of assume that, Well, you know, they're this like rebellious force, so therefore they're like mobilizing disgruntled, left-behind, working class voters, this kind of thing. But really actually, if you look at the electorate and the overall right-wing vote, you know where the votes have come from, it's quite clear that basically what's happened is that Fratelli d'Italia - Brothers of Italy - [00:07:00] now has basically won votes from its own allies. The overall right-

wing vote is basically the same as it was in the 1990s and 2000s, you know, mid-40s percent. So in that sense, there's not really an expansion of the electorate.

There are of course certain changes which have happened as Fratelli d'Italia's become a bigger party. I mean, in 2018 it only got 4%. So it's very, then it had a very identitarian electorate that probably previously belonged to other sort of neofascist parties. Whereas this time it had a lot more things like, uh, you know, holding a conference where it sort of showed off its business credentials, including a few other kind of former Berlusconi ministers and that kind of thing in order to project the image of a sort of broader right-wing party, but within which the sort of old fascist tradition still, is still somehow part.

JEN PAN - CO-HOST, THE JACOBIN SHOW: So that brings up something interesting, which is, you know, in your articles, part of what you have argued is that, this [00:08:00] rise was, on one hand, kind of a long time in the making and that the center-right, you know, supposedly more moderate or supposedly, you know, parties that were supposed to be like a moderating force actually enabled and helped accelerate the rise of the far right. Uh, so how exactly has, has this played out over the last couple years?

DAVID BRODER: Well, so there's this coalition of these three right-wing parties. And, you know, the first time they went to government together was already in 1994. Silvio Berlusconi - the billionaire tycoon often, you know, compared to Trump and so on - he gave a speech in 2019 where he said, Well, you know, in the 1990s I brought the fascists into government. He actually used the word fascists. Um, you know, I constitutionalized and legitimized them, I sort of brought them into the tent. But over time, while he had a dominant position in the right-wing coalition in the 90s and 2000s, that's kind of ebbed, particularly [00:09:00] in the post-2008 crisis period, partly because Berlusconi has often gone into a sort of broad tent or technocratic governments, which has sort of undermined his hold on the right and then turns or pushes voters towards the further right options. You know, we saw Matteo Salvini's Lega even before this, was took over the leadership of the right wing from Berlusconi. But then also I think there's a strange kind of reinvention of Berlusconi in recent years as a kind of cuddlier and more moderate figure, which is rather strange for anyone who remembers the 2000s. It bears obvious comparison with the way in which George W. Bush, how his legacy has been sort of reinterpreted by parts of the U.S. sort of centrist and center-right in the wake of Trump, in the sense that a figure who was previously seen as extreme and as pushing away from the more, the imagined more moderate traditions of his party, then in turn becomes [00:10:00] the golden age who was longed for. But yeah, I mean,

Berlusconi's governments played an important role in questioning the kind of anti-fascist identity of the Italian Republic, in focusing policy on harsh attacks on immigrants, and in electing or appointing former fascists to ministerial roles.

Fascist Brothers of Italy Party takes power in Italy Part 2 - The Mehdi Hassan Show - Air Date 10-2-22

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: You know Italian politics better than most, you know Meloni herself. Is this fascism? Is this a neofascist authoritarian party that's about to take power?

RULA JEBREAL: Absolutely. It's a neofascist -- she herself was an activist, a militant in a neofascist group when she was only 15. She never changed since then. She'd been elected a week ago and she's already threatening to sue journalist critics. I mean, I debated her on multiple occasions. She denied that fascism exists, but she never disavowed her fascist space, her brother-in-law, Lollobrigida, who happened [00:11:00] to be also a party member, her right hand, but also in charge of the reforms, built, finance mausoleums, crypts to fascist generals who committed war crimes, who committed atrocity. Her party celebrated fascist general who covered up massacres in Italy. People died in Italy because fascist bombed across the countries from the seventies on. They covered up and they celebrated that.

She endorsed extreme policies. She think that the LGBT community, immigrants, minorities are a threat to traditional identity. She call herself Christian. That means anybody that is not Christian somehow is a threat, is an existential threat.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: Following Meloni's election, you tweeted about a video that she shared back in August, which appeared to show a woman being attacked, raped even, by an asylum seeker. Pretty gruesome stuff. You also pointed out that her father, who is estranged, she hasn't seen him since she was a child, was a convicted drug trafficker. Think you were making the point [00:12:00] that people shouldn't be conflated with other people. Meloni responded to that in a post on Facebook appearing to threaten a lawsuit against you.

Have you been contacted by her lawyers and do you see this as her trying to silence journalistic criticism?

RULA JEBREAL: Absolutely. This is typical fascist politics. The founder of her party, Crosetto, but also her brother-in-law on multiple occasions, threatened me with lawsuits, but also threatened other journalists who currently are living under police protection, Mehdi. The person who broke the stories about Meloni's family financing these crypts, these mausoleums, the fascist general, is Paulo Brizi. He lives under police protection. He was threatened to be sued on multiple occasions. But in my case, because I'm black, the only black, the only Muslim voice, only Italian television, she singled me out.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: Yeah. Coincidence.

RULA JEBREAL: I'm not the person that worked a story about her father. I simply suggested that nobody should generalize her own father was a drug [00:13:00] trafficker. She's not to blame. But she's blaming and demonizing, criminalizing on immigrants. She used me as this example to silence everybody else.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: I should point out that she and her party publicly officially disavow fascism even though she's on record praising Italian fascists from the Mussolini period, and she has spouted a version of Great Replacement Theory. Watch: "Great Replacement Theory is very popular in America, thanks to Tucker Carlson/Fox."

Let's talk about the warm embrace Meloni's received from conservatives here. What does that say about the GOP?

DEAN OBEIDALLAH: I mean, fascists flock together, right? The only difference between male fascists and Italy's Meloni is lipstick. She wears pastel colors. She wears sneakers. She wears lipstick. She smiles. She's a mother and she's a fascist. It's a concept called genderwashing when you use women to soften the image of an authoritarian. But remove it, it's the same. There's a reason why Steve Bannon has allied with her for years, why he praises her. There's a reason why CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference invited her to speak in [00:14:00] 2022.

They also invited Victor Orban of Hungary, who has praised her. Also Ted Cruz praised her. Tucker Carlson had. Kari Lake, who's running for governor of Arizona, who praised her and said, she's saying exactly what I wanna say, right? So this is a right-wing alliance.

And I also wanna remind people that as a 19-year-old youth activist, she praised Mussolini. She said he was a good politician. Anything he did good he did good for Italy, like aligning with the Nazis? And she's never disavowed. At least Marine LePen disavowed her anti-Semitic father. Meloni has never disavowed in any way, shape or form Mussolini. What do you think she is? Let's play Taboo. Fascist.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: So a lot of people watching this, Dean, will say, Ah, liberals, leftists, they call everyone a fascist. Even though we're talking about someone who specifically runs a party that's descended from the post-fascist party of 1946.

I would say that some in our own industry, Dean, as I pointed out in my commentary before the break, they also wanna play down the F word. There's a lot of like, Let's calm down. She's not so bad. I feel like it's 2016 [00:15:00] all over again, Dean.

DEAN OBEIDALLAH: Very much so. And I don't know what it is. I mean, maybe you talk with these people in the media every day. What is going on in their minds that they feel like they have to whitewash it, or both sides it? Edward R. Murrow famously said, they're not two sides to every story, and I wish more in the media would take that to heart.

And I remember writing an article a few weeks after the election saying that Donald Trump was plotting a coup and I had a pushback by people going, You're outrageous. How dare you say that?

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: Yeah. Same.

DEAN OBEIDALLAH: In more recent times these terms, "fascist". I think part of it, Mehdi, like you did in your tweet, we have to explain what that means. 'Cause people think it's like we're doing a mirror of the right saying we're socialist. We have to explain what's fascism, that it's an enemy of democracy at its essence; understand that.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: Yeah.

DEAN OBEIDALLAH: It's embracing violence. It's about getting people against each other. It's destabilized institution. But it's the enemy of democracy. Nothing else you take away from me: Enemy of democracy -- that is fascism. That's what these people are about.

MEHDI HASSAN - HOST, THE MEHDI HASSAN SHOW: Well said. Well said, Dean.

Rula, this idea that you are the enemy of democracy, the enemy of [00:16:00] women's rights. You're the enemy of minority communities, both immigrants and gay and lesbian, transgender communities. You see that in Italy. You see that here in the US. There are some commonalities, Rula. And then you see Iranian women protesting against their own authoritarian anti-democratic government. And you wonder, how much credibility do some people in the west have to be standing with those Iranian women, given what's happening in our own countries? I look at authoritarianism globally, and I wonder we have to fight it everywhere, do we not?

RULA JEBREAL: Absolutely Mehdi. But also we have to understand this is a global movement. We go back to Meloni. Meloni in 2018 said on video -- I repeat, on video -- that she actually support the Hezbollah militias, she supports Assad, she supports Putin, because somehow they're defending Christianity in Syria. This is what she said. In that context, she also said that she endorsed torture because it's a good tool for law enforcement so they can defend [00:17:00] themselves. This is what she says. So when they are whitewashing her in our national media, that's what she craves the most: legitimacy. That's what she wants. She wants to be normalized. The way that fascism creep globally and take over is by being normalized and by making it socially acceptable, and it is dangerous to minorities. This woman actually is the only party, the only leader of a party in Italy who's a woman who voted against woman rights, especially equal pay.

Fascism scores another victory with Italian election - The Rachel Maddow Show - Air Date 9-26-22

DAVID CORN: Talking about what happened in Italy this past few days, over the hundred year stretch, you see the patterns, you see what you call the rhymes of history, and in doing this book, *American Psychosis*, I saw the same thing in American history. We see patterns again and again that even we live through that we don't recognize that the Republican Party—and we're now having a debate about whether MAGA extremism is something akin to fascism—but the Republican party for 70 years keeps having this dance with extremism, encouraging and exploiting extremism. [00:18:00] It's happened all the time.

What we see now with Donald Trump and the Republican Party is not a[n] aberration, it's a continuation, and I was struck because I was reading up on the Italian election earlier today and there was an academic in Europe who was talking about the history, and he said what we're seeing in Italy is nothing new. You make that point quite obviously, but even in the last 50 years, the far right has always been there, starting at the end of World War II, and it has bubbled up and bubbled down, bubbled up and bubble down, and now it's just emerging, but it's always been there.

The same way that. I think, we've always had a fringe far-right fanaticism here that the Republican party has always tried to exploit to its own benefit, whether it was McCarthyism, the Birchers, white segregationist in this in the 60s and 70s, and Donald Trump just made it burst out. And it's interesting.

In Italy, they have a multiple party system. So in Italy the fringe elements, the far own parties. In [00:19:00] America, it doesn't work that way. We don't have multiple parties, but we have seen the expansion of the influence of these extremists within the Republican party. The Republican party acting like a coalition in Europe. Taking them in to get power and juice to the extent that we even see Donald Trump in recent days welcoming the QAnon movement into his Trumpist Republican party the way that the majority, or the close to majority, coalition in Italy has taken in and has been led by the fascists.

Rachel Maddow - Host, The Rachel Maddow Show: David, I was struck by the fact that you document, over and over again, these moments where what we consider to be the mainstream Republican party has to confront how much they wanna be associated with people who they see, and movements that they see, as toxic, anti-democratic, extreme, and, in most cases, embarrassing.

You talk about that with the John Birch Society, for example, and elements of the Goldwater campaign, and the [00:20:00] conservative media around that time. You talk about it with Dwight Eisenhower, General Eisenhower, as President Eisenhower having to confront McCarthyism and the appeal of Joe McCarthy both at home in Wisconsin, where he was an incredibly towering figure, but also in terms of the way he tapped into some real dangerous energy on the far right.

I feel like you've busted a bunch of myths in terms of these sort of self-serving histories where we've told ourselves left, right, and center, that the Republican Party, the mainstream Republican party, has effectively policed those extremes and kept them at bay until now. In fact, I think, tell me if I'm wrong, but what I took from your book is that there are multiple instances in which the guys who

we think of as the good guys, or at least the mainstream people, actually chose deliberately to keep cultivating those extremes, to keep those, the QAnon movements of their time alive and agitating for the Republican cause.

DAVID CORN: Again, the pattern is obvious once you go back and look. There is not a single major Republican president or presidential candidate who did not [00:21:00] embrace extremism to some degree. It waxes and wanes and some have done it more intensely than others, but it's always in part of the Republican playbook.

A recent example that, of course, you'll remember and most of our viewers will, would be John Boehner embracing the Tea Party. The Tea Party was an extremist movement. Was arguing that Barack Obama was a secret socialist Muslim, born in Africa, had a secret plan to destroy the American economy so he could impose a totalitarian dictatorship. It's irrational the way McCarthyism was irrational and the way the QAnon is irrational. And John Boehner, country club Republican, he knew that, but he invited the Tea Party literally onto the steps of the capital for demonstrations, brought them into the party because they helped him get elected Speaker. They then chased him out, but he validated and authenticated the Tea Party perspective.

And like McCarthyism, the Birchers, or you go over to the fascists of Europe, there's a core there, and the element that I see uniting all this [00:22:00] is that they look at the other side, their political enemies, and they demonize and dehumanize them. They're subversive, they want to destroy their society. The McCarthyites believed there was a cabal that wanted to turn the US over to the Soviets, and that was being run by people in the US government. I just described the tea party conspiracy theory. We know what the QAnon on conspiracy theory is, and if you listen to what Meloni is saying, she's saying, literally—the other day I saw a speech of hers—she says Financial speculators, I don't know what that's code for, and woke activists want to steal our identity, our identities as Italians, Christians, and women and men, and turn us into consumer slaves.

That's very QAnonish in a way, but it's all about challenging the other side, not on a matter of policy disputes or disagreeing on whether it's abortion or tax policy, but calling them subversives, who wanna destroy the country we love, take away our culture from us. [00:23:00] The Republicans have played that game again and again and again, and I'm sorry, you know we can't both sides this. There is no equivalent on the Democratic side. This is the asymmetrical political history.

The book describes this, and I think it portrays the dark side of the GOP for 70 years that the party itself has not acknowledged and that history and journalists have often not paid enough attention to as they should, but now we see it in full view because Donald Trump has made it centerstage.

The Stakes Are High - In The Thick - Air Date 10-4-22

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Well listen, Fernanda, you know, and I don't want to pigeonhole you because you are from Brazil, but we want to take advantage of your knowledge, and you've been following all this news out of Brazil, which on Sunday we saw the first round of their presidential election. And even though former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva - Lula - of the leftist Workers' Party received more votes than the far-right incumbent, Jair Bolsonaro, neither [00:24:00] candidate won more than 50% of the vote, so that means there will be another runoff election at the end of the month, and Bolsonaro actually ended up doing better than polls had indicated. Fernanda, you tweeted about how this felt like the most consequential political weekend in Brazil since you left your homeland in 1998. Brazil is the fourth largest democracy in the world and you can talk about how democratic it is or it's, you know, that's a big question. It's a young democracy. So how have you been feeling about the election results and how can you put them into context for all of us?

FERNANDA SANTOS: Well, there's so much to unpack there, but I, you know when I woke up this morning, I thought, Is there a map that shows, you know, kind of like the CNN maps that we see Wolf Blitzer, you know, showing this state went for this, like I wanted to know, you know, which states went for Lula and which states went for Bolsonaro. And then I wasn't surprised with what I've found. Essentially the northeastern [00:25:00] part of Brazil - I come from the northeastern part of Brazil, the state of Bahia, and all these states in this region of Brazil are the poorest, neediest, and also Blackest states in Brazil. The legacy of slavery and also the large influence of Indigenous populations in this part is very present. The miscegenation of Brazil is very much what defines this region - and the entire region went for Lula. He won every single state in that region. But then if you look at southern Brazil - Sao Paulo and the state south of Sao Paulo, also Rio, those were states that are more centers of business and, uh, wealthier, much more influenced by Europe, uh, especially the southern tip of Brazil, large German, Italian immigration. So they're a lot more White, as we understand White to be. And these states all went for Bolsonaro. In addition to large landowning states, states where lots of the landowners and a lot of

[00:26:00] the land is. So it really, the result, what it shows is two Brazils, you know, this is a battle between the two countries that have always, obviously, coexisted being a part of one thing, but they're actually fragments of one thing, that's not a unity, which is a lot like what we have been talking about here in the United States since Trump got elected, although obviously it predates Trump, right?

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Yeah. But this is the question I have, and Sabrina, you mentioned, the future of democracy in the United States, but also when it comes to Brazil, like Bolsonaro's already, he's already starting to set the stage for what, "rigged election". Sabrina, you wanna jump in because it seems like, are we witnessing a Trump playbook in Brazil? Or at least from what you've been following, Sabrina, just jump in and then, Fernanda, give us your thoughts as well about this.

SABRINA RODRIGUEZ: I mean, this is something that we're seeing, you know, right-wing candidates throughout the world, not exclusively right-wing candidates. But talking about, you know, voter [00:27:00] fraud, lack of trust in elections, the erosion of democracy, can we rely on the results that we're seeing? So it's not surprising if we hear more of that from Bolsonaro in the coming days and weeks, I would say. But I would trust the resident expert here, Fernanda, on all things Brazil.

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: I'm the same way, but I just want, you know, you're Latin Americanist like me. You know, you follow it.

SABRINA RODRIGUEZ: What I can say is though, it's obvious already from like seeing Twitter and seeing like Brazilian Americans in Miami, for example, that you know, voted for Bolsonaro starting to question like, Mmm, did Lula really win? Like, or, you know, are already kind of prognosticating about the runoff, you know, and trying to see how exactly votes will be consolidated for Bolsonaro to ultimately win. So there's always speculation around it and I think for months we've kind of been gearing up, those that pay attention to Latin America. We saw some of the conversations with the Columbian election. Now we're seeing it with Brazil, so I can expect a lot more of the same in the coming days. [00:28:00]

JULIO RICARDO VARELA - CO-HOST, IN THE THICK: Yeah. Fernanda, I mean that notion of this young democracy and you're gonna have this incumbent who, he's already suggesting that there's fraud. What does that

mean in the context of Brazilian politics for you? Like given the history of the country?

FERNANDA SANTOS: Well, I was born in 1973, and it was only 12 years later that the military dictatorship that had installed itself in '64 ended in Brazil. So we're talking about a really, really young democracy currently run by a president who has really taken a page out of Trump's playbook. Although I think Trump and his people also learned a lot from Bolsonaro in Brazil and he's been using even some of the same language. There is an appropriation of the yellow and green colors of the Brazilian flag. They're now representative of him. The word "patriot", "patriotism" has been hijacked to mean support for him and his policies. You have this idea that he's this God-sent [00:29:00] candidate who came to save Brazil from doomsday, when in reality there are a lot of questions about policies he's had with Indigenous populations, with the destruction of the Amazon, with the large number of former members of the military who are now in positions of power in ministries running, you know, important agencies in Brazil without necessarily having come from that world and have the expertise required. So, you know, obviously from Brazil it means a decision about the kind of country that it's gonna be in the future. The type of relations that it's gonna have to a country like the United States that's currently run by a Democratic president. But one of the most interesting things I remember, I think it was sometime in last month, there was a story from the BBC that quoted both Steve Bannon and Patrick Leahy, so people from completely opposite sides of the political spectrum, both saying how consequential this election would be, not just for Brazil, but for Latin America [00:30:00] and for the world. And I do believe that the fact that they're both paying close attention to it means that we should, you know, as Americans, as people who care about democracy, we should be paying attention because if it can happen in Brazil, and whatever it is that happens, it can happen anywhere else. I'm very worried. I'm just really very worried.

Noam Chomsky & Vijay Prashad: A Lula Victory in Brazil Could Help Save the Planet - Democracy Now! - Air Date 9-30-22

JUAN GONZALEZ: Well, Noam Chomsky, following up on that, the significance politically for Latin America and the world of a Lula victory, given the fact that we've seen now Latin America go from the early pink tide of the early 2000s, then there was a resurgence of right-wing government and lawfare

actions throughout the region, and now we're seeing almost every major country in Latin America voting in left-wing governments — Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, and Brazil, of course, is the largest country. This is a region with [00:31:00] no nuclear weapons, with no major armed conflicts in the region right now. What would Lula coming to victory mean for the consolidation of this left-wing trend in Latin America?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Yes, you can add Chile to the list. Brazil is, of course, the largest, most important country in South and Latin America. And the direction in which Brazil goes is sure to have a major impact on these tendencies that you describe. Of course, they're bitterly opposed by most of the business world, by the international investment community. What happens in Brazil could be certain to have a large-scale effect on whether this mildly left [00:32:00] social democratic tendency will continue to develop and evolve.

That's very important on the international scene, as well. It will, for example, affect the character of BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, now Indonesia — developing independent, possibly independent, force in global affairs. During the early years of the century, when Lula was in power, he managed to give the BRICS alignment a significant role in world affairs. In fact, Brazil became perhaps the most respected country internationally under Lula and his foreign minister, Celso Amorim. [00:33:00] And if he returns to office, that could give an impetus to the development — the further development of BRICS as a quite significant element in international affairs.

That's connected with much broader tendencies, much broader issues about multipolarity and unipolarity in international affairs. The United States, of course, is working hard to maintain what's called a unilateral world order. Other elements in the world, other components in the world are not going along with that. Ukraine is a central part of that issue. About 90% of the countries of the world are not going along with the U.S.-U.K. [00:34:00] position on Ukraine, which is basically to continue the war to weaken Russia and no negotiations. Even in Europe, like in Germany, that's not accepted. About over three-quarters of the German population wants to move to negotiations now. All of these things are taking place in the background, and what's happening in Brazil will have a significant impact on the direction in which they go.

So there are many large issues at stake, also just domestically in Brazil. Brazil has extraordinary inequality, kind of like the United States in that respect. An enormous amount — it's potentially a very rich country. A century ago, it was called the "Colossus of the South." It's never been realized, partly because of the [00:35:00] avarice of the wealthy sector, which has basically no

commitment to the country. And that will move in one or the other direction, depending on the outcome of this election.

So there is quite a lot at stake, locally in Brazil, in Latin America altogether, as you mentioned, and even globally, because of the role of the Latin American countries traditionally in the lead in setting the stage for the next phase of global order.

Brazil Votes For Democracy While SCOTUS Does Not - The Muckrake Political Podcast - Air Date 9-4-22

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: It turns out that Lula did lead Bolsonaro after the election this past weekend. He ended up with 48% of the vote. Unfortunately, Bolsonaro ended up with 43% of the vote. Nobody broke the 50% threshold, which means that we are now primed for a runoff election on October 30th, which is kind of a mess, Nick, for a variety of [00:36:00] reasons. It means that a really, really, volatile situation in Brazil is now going to escalate because we're heading into this runoff. It also means that Bolsonaro has more support than what a lot of us hoped that maybe he had or didn't have. Uh, he has also been prepped by such people as Steve Bannon and the people around Donald Trump in order to carry out anti-democratic actions, and there's still the specter of a coup. Uh, Nick, bad stuff all around.

NICK HAUSELMAN - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: Lots to unpack. You know, I'm surprised that you, we have the good friend of The Breakdown, Mike Lindell, is involved in the Bannon things as well. Was that on purpose that you wanted to leave him out and make him feel bad or just, uh, you know...

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: Well, Mike Lindell is just sort of wandering from one room to another, squeezing his pillow and giving people money. I mean, he's sort of like a walking ATM to these people. So of course, he's...

NICK HAUSELMAN - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: Well, you know, I tried, it's funny, you know the, interestingly enough, the polls had indicated that it wouldn't be as close, even though 5% is kind of a, you know, a nice, solid lead for Lula. But like, you know, that gives

[00:37:00] rise to Bolsonaro to sort of accuse, like, the polls are always wrong, everyone's lying about this, you see, I'm a victim here. And, uh, he's certainly been priming the country to either say that, like, only God is going to remove him or death, and, uh, and I'm not willing to die, you know, I'm not gonna die for this. So you have to be very concerned cuz it sounds a little familiar, doesn't it?

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: It does. It does. And real fast, let's go ahead and let's listen to a quick clip. Let's hear Steve Bannon in four contexts. For those who don't know, this is at one of Mike Lindell's, one of his cyber breakdown conferences a while back, you lose track. He does these things all the time. Basically, people go and get free food. He gives them a bunch of money. But it's Bannon sitting next to Mike Lindell, but who's hanging out with them? It's Jair Bolsonaro's son, who happens to also be a politician and a bit player in all of this. Let's, uh, let's give this a listen.

STEVE BANNON: Well, you see, it's just not in the United States, right? See?

MIKE LINDELL: Well, next October, remember, [00:38:00] 30 days, about 30 days before this monumental midterm election, he's gonna face his father, Jair Bolsonaro is gonna face the most dangerous leftist in the world, Lula. A criminal, a communist, and supported by all the media here in the United States, all the left wing media. This election is the second most important election in the world, right? In the most important elections ever in South America. Bolsonaro will win unless it's stolen by, guess what? The machines.

STEVE BANNON: The machines.

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: And again, here we are. This is the Trumpian playbook, which says very, very succinctly, if he loses, if Bolsonaro loses, then there's nothing else to believe besides the fact that this has been stolen by the machines. And I have to say, like, this is one of those weird mind bending things, Nick. Bolsonaro outperformed all of the polls. All of the polls. Like, this is actually a victory by Bolsonaro, but they have to [00:39:00] take that victory and spin it into a giant conspiracy, and they want both things at once, which is, look how much better I did than the polls, but also I should have more support than this. It was stolen from me. It is mind-breakingly stupid.

NICK HAUSELMAN - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL PODCAST: Well, we have to now look at, like, the other, what was remaining

of the percentage, who now drop out of the race, who now becomes a two person race. Um, I mean, what are your feelings about what the rest of those votes go towards? And if Lula's gonna be able to just kind of hang onto this lead?

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL

PODCAST: Well, so it looks like, in a world that makes sense, that Lula's going to walk away with this thing. It looks like he'll probably end up getting, if I had to put a number on it, and God knows that these numbers don't always mean anything anymore, if I had to put a number on it, I would say that Lula walks out, if everything stays the way it is, you put it in a vacuum sealed jar and just sort of move it on to October 30th, I'd say Lula ends up with 53-54%. But, here's... there's a couple things that are happening here. Bolsonaro is going to gain [00:40:00] momentum from this, right? The fact that he outperformed this, he's sending it to a runoff. Second of all, the lead up to this election, there have been people murdered, over the lead up to this election. People are getting shot, people are getting stabbed. There are fights in the streets. There are all kinds of these aggressive moments in which Bolsonaro supporters are going after Worker [sic] Party, Lula's people, and hurting them. To go ahead and use that conspiracy theory that we're documenting here, basically, they are going to believe that they're going on to defend themselves. And that means possibly more violence, that means maybe intimidation at the polls. So right now, I mean this thing, it's an Etch A Sketch that's gonna get shook up. And the question also, and this is something, and here's a quick quiz for the Muckrake listeners out there, why did Lula underperform? Yes, there are reasons why, people like Bolsonaro, there's cultural stuff, there's [inaudible] there. Nick, this communist leftist, right? Do you think that he [00:41:00] campaigned as a leftist or do you think he campaigned as a centrist, Nick?

NICK HAUSELMAN - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL

PODCAST: Oh, I'm gonna, I'll go with centrist for 300, Bob.

JARED YATES SEXTON - CO-HOST, THE MUCKRAKE POLITICAL

PODCAST: Yep. He most definitely did campaign as a centrist because he has sort of brought along a coalition of people. He, uh, and tell me if this sounds familiar to American politics, he didn't have much of a plan for what's going to happen in the future. Maybe some light taxing of the wealthy, but that's about it. There's no real massive change, right? It's the same sort of conditions that we see here in America. So what's he gonna do now? Do you go ahead and play conservatively, which we know oftentimes will go ahead and screw you in the long run? Or do you, like, let your flag fly and you talk about like plans and things to move the country forward? There's no telling what's going to happen at

this point, but I have, the one thing that's for sure is there's probably gonna be some violence and some radicalization that spills out of this.

Rise of the Swedish far right w/ David Broder - Jacobin Show - Air Date 9-30-22

JEN PAN - CO-HOST, THE JACOBIN SHOW: And so I guess the question for you is, what kinds of long-term changes to Sweden's economy and, you know, the welfare state and trade [00:42:00] union movements may have come before this moment that could have precipitated the rise or helped precipitate the rise of the Sweden Democrats?

ALEX GOUREVITCH: When we look at this specific election, the shift between the left and the right was tiny, tiny, uh, less than a half percentage points. So we were already in a very tight situation in, in, uh, 2018. As I said, the Centre Party, uh, chose to align with the Left or chose to become a supporter of the Left rather than entering into a negotiation with the populace. That party lost badly in the election, in this current election. The Liberals lost badly in the current election and the Christian Democrats lost badly in the current election. If you look at their sort of original three left parties, they lost badly in 2006 and in 2010 and in [00:43:00] 2014. But in this election they did, they actually, their combined vote share, Social Democrats, Left, and Greens actually increased. So in that sense, as you rightly say, what happened in this election has to do with kind of a recomposition of the center right or the right block, a recomposition of the right block, and now a kind of symbolic acceptance of the populists that had... So the story is really about the Swedish right, in this particular election, I think.

Going back to this picture we have of Sweden as, yeah, lots of people have and I sometimes share it or, and in any case, I profit from it since it gives me an opportunity to talk a lot. Um, so when the Social Democrats were in power in between [00:44:00] 1994- 2006, uh, they pursued a series of policies, which, you know, in the European context we often refer to as the third way. Uh, and those policies involved, uh, reducing marginal income taxes on the rich. This was an agreement with the bourgeois parties, so a kind of reducing the progressive taxation, if you want call it that, and capping overall taxation, putting lots of money into tertiary education, and trying to maintain public services and financing some of that by reducing unemployment insurance compensation, sick pay, and social assistance and introducing, you know, this was all done in the name of [00:45:00] increasing people's employability, social investment, investing in the, in children instead of spending on consumption,

spending on investment, and that this would generate a more equal society, or that this would generate a more equal society in the long run. If you look at the distribution of income among working age households, and I like to leave the elderly out, they have, it's a kind of special category, but if you look at the, if you look at the Gini coefficient, which is only one of many measures, of course, of inequality, but if you look at disposable household income, working age households, the Gini coefficient, which is, yeah, it, ranges between zero and one and if you are at one, then, the smaller the number is the more equal the society is - I can talk about [00:46:00] that if you want - but the Gini coefficient for disposable income increased by 37% from 1992 to 2018. So disposable income inequality has grown a lot. And what is striking is that in Sweden, this is somewhat different from a number of other countries. The Gini coefficient for market income, that is to say people's earnings, household earnings, before taxes and transfers only increased by 13%. So more than half and nearly two thirds of the increase in inequality has happened through changes in the tax system and the income transfer system.

So, it's really the welfare state that has been, in some ways, reconfigured and the Social Democrats were not the only people who did this. The non-left parties were in power in the early nineties, and again from [00:47:00] 2006 to 2014. But the Social Democrats did not reverse what those bourgeois governments had done. And in fact, in many ways, I think, initiated changes that contributed this kind of retreat from redistribution. And to go back to something you were hinting at when you were talking about, uh, populous voters in the U.S. and so on, I think a lot of Swedish working class voters kind of, they observe inequality, their households are struggling much more, especially after or since 2008, their households are struggling in a way they were not, they are convinced with fairly good reason that mainstream parties of the left and the right are not going to do anything. They haven't done anything for 20 years. Taxing the rich is not an [00:48:00] option and, according to all of these parties, we have maxed out on overall taxation or overall public spending.

Welfare chauvinism becomes a fairly rational way to try to deal with this problem from the point of view of native Swedes and also from the point of view of some immigrants who've been around for 20, 30 years or something like that. So now we're, so the pie to be redistributed isn't going to grow. And now we're looking for some criteria whereby I and my household and my community can improve their gain, get more from this pie and, you know, saying that, from the point of view these people saying that people who have yet to become citizens or people who have lived here for less than 10 years, you know, maybe that's a fair criterion for deciding who gets unemployment benefits and who [00:49:00] doesn't, or who gets childcare subsidies and who doesn't. So, in that sense I think many of us, political scientists, kind of attribute the problems of

the left to these cultural issues: gay marriage, multiculturalism, all the woke things that the left is doing. And in my opinion, there is a, I don't wanna say that that isn't a problem in the eyes of working class voters, but I think the problem is very much about material grievances and the fact that the left isn't speaking to the, or hasn't spoken, has kind of retreated from or taken a we-are-responsible-for-managing-the-economy-and-this-comes-first kind of position.

Fascism scores another victory with Italian election Part 2 - The Rachel Maddow Show - Air Date 9-26-22

Rachel Maddow - Host, The Rachel Maddow Show: It was almost exactly 100 years ago. It was 1922, it was October, 1922, and the fascist party announced that they would march into the nation's capital, they would march on Rome.[00:50:00] The Prime Minister at the time knew that if they were gonna march on Rome, this meant that the fascists were gonna try to take over. They were gonna try to mount a physical, fascist coup.

To defend against that, he wanted to call up the military to defend Rome, to stop the coup, but the king at the time wouldn't agree to that. So the military wasn't called up to defend the capital, and instead what the king did is he caved to the fascists. He invited the leader of the fascists to form a government, to become the new Prime Minister, and the head of the fascists enthusiastically agreed. And the tens of thousands of his supporters who he had threatened would march on Rome to seize power in a coup, they didn't march on Rome to seize power. Instead, they marched on Rome in a victory parade, because just the threat of them had made it so that he was handed power, bloodlessly.

That [00:51:00] is how the fascists took power in Italy 100 years ago next month. They threatened to take power by force, didn't have to because they intimidated everybody into giving them power ahead of their march on Rome. That's the famous march on Rome, October, 1922. The centennial of that event will be next month.

When it happened in 1922 things in Italy changed pretty quickly. Within three years, by 1925, Italy was a one party state. Within three years after that, by 1928, Mussolini had abolished elections altogether. It was a full on fascist dictatorship. And not to spoil the plot or anything, but as you may know things and did poorly for everyone.

We think of the end of World War II, I think mostly here in the United States, we think of it as August, 1945. The US dropped atomic bombs on Japan in August. Japan surrendered just a few days later. [00:52:00] But, of course, Japan was just one of the Axis powers. Things ended months earlier in Europe. April of that year, April 25th, 1945 is when Italy celebrates its Liberation Day, the day that Italy was liberated from both fascist rule and Nazi occupation.

On that day, April 25th, 1945, the fascist leader who had been in power since 1922, Benito Mussolini, he tried to flee the country. He fled the country, or tried to flee the country, starting April 25th, 1945. Within two days, he was caught. He was disguised as a Nazi soldier wearing German army gear. He was caught on a rural road near Lake Como, just north of Milan. He tried to flee starting on the 25th. They caught him on the 27th. They held him overnight, and then early in the morning on the side of a rural road on April 28th, they shot him dead. Then, for something I [00:53:00] think more than indignity, something more than just the end, they didn't just leave him there on the side of the road. They threw Mussolini's corpse into a truck and drove it back to Milan.

Now, I have to warn you if you're squeamish or if you've got kids watching with you, you may not wanna see this. I'm only gonna show this for a second, and I'm only gonna show it once. So if you don't wanna see it, I understand, but this is what they did with him in Milan. They hung his corpse upside down from the feet off of a metal girder and they left it there, hanging in the square in Milan. It was him and his mistress and other top fascist officials who were executed alongside him.

And believe it or not, it kind of got worse from there. The US military ordered his body taken down. They ordered his body autopsied, cause of death not hard to figure out at that point. They buried him in an unmarked grave, but it apparently wasn't unmarked enough. The following year, in 1946, a fascist supporter of Mussolini found him in that [00:54:00] unmarked grave, dug him up and stole his body, where upon the fascists started shuttling that corpse all over the place. They dragged this thing so all over the place that at least one report suggests that it lost one of its legs along the way. But they ended up hiding his body, such as it was, in a monastery for more than a decade, until the mid 1950s.

In 1957, they decided to dig him up again at that monastery, and they put him in his family's tomb, in his hometown. And so now fascist the world over can have little fascist pilgrimages to the, maybe, final resting place of old peg leg Mussolini. Like I said, it did not end well for anyone, let alone him. But supporters of that dictatorship, supporters of that variety of fascism, they don't

only have the mausoleum to remember Mussolini by, because the year after he was [00:55:00] killed, right around the time that his body was getting dug up and shuttled around by his supporters, a year after the end of World War II 1946, a man who had served as chief of staff in Mussolini's government founded a new political party to carry on the spirit of Mussolini, to carry on the Mussolini dream.

By then, of course, Italy had lost World War II. Mussolini had come to the end that he had come to. By then it was overtly illegal to form a fascist party in Italy. It's understandable given what they had been through. Because an overt fascist party was illegal when they founded this new party to keep alive the spirit of Mussolini, they couldn't use as the symbol of the new party, the old symbol that he had used, that old cluster of rods that he used as the symbol of fascism from his day. So they instead picked a different symbol, they picked a flame colored red, green, and white, the colors of the Italian flag. It's supposed to represent the eternal flame that is maintained at the [00:56:00] grave of Mussolini. The grave of Mussolini, which is now the pilgrimage site for fascists worldwide.

So again, Mussolini's dead, really dead, in April, 1945. The guy who was the Chief of Staff in Mussolini's government the next year, 1946, forms this new party to keep fascism, to keep the spirit of Mussolini, alive. That guy, who had been the Chief of Staff in the Mussolini government, he ran that party for years. The next head of the party after him said publicly that Mussolini was the greatest statesman of the 20th century.

The party chief after him declared about his party quote, "We are all heirs of Il Duce, we are all heirs of Mussolini." They weren't exactly hiding their light under a bushel. This is the party designed to keep the legacy of Mussolini alive. But that guy who said, "we are all the heirs of Il Duce, we are all the heirs of Mussolini," that was the last head of that party [00:57:00] before now. The head of that party now today just claimed victory for her party, and she is about to become the next prime minister of Italy.

Back in 1922, Mussolini's success with his march on Rome, the fascist coup he was able to pull off in Italy, at the time, that seemed so successful it seemed like it could be replicated elsewhere. It inspired a particular guy in Germany to try the same thing in Bavaria. He planned basically same approach, a show of force, a relatively small violent cadre trying to take over through pure intimidation. In Bavaria, what he tried was called the Beer Hall Putsch. It was just a year after the march on Rome, that was November, 1923 that they tried that, but even though it worked in Rome, in Bavaria, it didn't. The dude running

that effort got arrested, was tried and convicted, was sentenced to five years in prison, but then was released after only serving about nine months.

During his nine months in jail, he wrote a book that ended up doing very well for him. It was called *Mein Kampf*. After he got released, he then said about [00:58:00] capitalizing on his newfound fame and all the time he'd had to think about how he was gonna cease power for good the next time, which he did. Incidentally, I should mention, historians are pretty sure, not totally sure, but pretty sure that Hitler was informed as to what happened to Mussolini right before he died.

In that one fateful week in 1945, you've got, Mussolini trying to flee the country on the 25th. You've got him shot on the 28th. You've got him strung up upside down in Milan on the 29th. And then it is the 30th, the very next day, when Hitler killed himself in his bunker. And maybe learning what happened to Mussolini is part of what led to his decision to do that. Even though both Germany and Italy were defeated in World War II, both Germany and Italy surrendered, and the fascist leaders of both of those countries died within 48 hours of each other, coincidentally or not.

Germany, [00:59:00] subsequently, famously, went through an aggressive, decades long, painful process of deNazification. Plumbing the depths of why their country went that direction. Committing to the concept and to the practical realities that they can never do anything like that again. That happened in Germany, but no other country in Europe, including Italy, went through a process like that. And so we are at this very capital H historical moment right now, where history keeps telling us that the last time such and such happened is during these very, very, very dark times from the last century.

And it is, I know, uncomfortable to talk about this part of history. It is uncomfortable to talk about the second World War and the fascism of that time. But the reason we have to talk about it now is not to make a comparison, this is not to make an allegory between then and today, it's actually this history on its own terms. Mussolini really was the fascist dictator of Italy, and this is the party founded by his supporters and his staffers after his death. [01:00:00] That, as of today, is now going to rule Italy again. And this is obviously rattling everyone this side of Steve Bannon and CPAC. They apparently think it's delightful, but everybody else is back of the envelope tallying this up.

I mean, you look at the leaders who are congratulating Giorgia Meloni on her big win in Italy today. We've got Victor Orbán in Hungary, great hero of the American right and Fox News now. Victor Orbán runs Hungary where the

European Parliament says he has now effectively ended real democracy. We've also got the Law and Justice party in Poland, which is following the same playbook, to do the same thing that Orbán has done in Hungary, this time in Poland. We've got Marine Le Pen, the fascist leader in France who came very close to winning the French presidency against Emmanuel Macron earlier this year. We've got the new far right party that won the second highest share of the vote in Sweden a few weeks ago, the party literally founded by neoNazis and Skinheads that may now be part of the Swedish [01:01:00] government. And of course, we've got the Kremlin with Putin running a fascist dictatorship that is not only treating its own people in unspeakable ways, but it's now bursting out of its borders, invading its neighbors, taking territory away from other countries, which is the first time that has happened in Europe since, I'm sorry to say, World War II.

In Russia tomorrow they're gonna announce the so-called results of these sham Potemkin little votes that they're holding in parts of Ukraine. Ukraine has pushed Russia way back on the battlefield, so in areas that Russian troops can still operate, the Kremlin has now decided that they're going to declare democracy to be in effect, and they're going to hold a vote, a real good, real fair vote, at the point of a gun where they've already proclaimed that the result of the vote will be that Ukrainians want to be taken over by Russia.

These sham referendums they're doing, they're gonna announce the results tomorrow. They're patently ridiculous. There's no sense in which these are [01:02:00] real or legitimate elections, but they will use these fake elections, these fake votes, to do two things: to justify moving the border, to justify taking these parts of this other country, taking these parts of Ukraine and declaring that these are now part of Russia instead, that's one of the things they're doing with this set of sham referenda, these fake votes they're taking in Eastern Ukraine. But the other reason they're doing it is to make a mock of democracy. To make it seem like elections are just fake. "Oh, hey, you in the West, you say that voting is what makes things legitimate. Well, here's what we call a vote. What are you gonna criticize our democracy? We thought you loved voting. This is just what the people want. We're just following the desires of the people."

You take a back of the envelope tally in terms of how we're heading as a world in terms of authoritarian and indeed fascist forms of government versus [01:03:00] small D democracy. One side's winning right now. In our country we are six weeks out, as of tomorrow, from our first big national election since the party of the ousted right-wing president tried to maintain him in power by force, by a mass assault on the US Capitol, from his supporters.

It was just two years ago this past week, in the run up to that 2020 election when Trump started saying outright that he would not accept the results of that election unless he won. That was a crazy benchmark for American politics at the time, but it's now the new normal, not just for him, but for political candidates of his party. Hundreds of Republican candidates for office are standing for office six weeks from now on the premise that the last election result from 2020 shouldn't have counted, and maybe the next one shouldn't either, let's see how it turns.

And I think we think of this as a sort of tactical radicalism on the part of Trump era Republicans, a [01:04:00] threat to the technical nuts and bolts, first Tuesday in July, system by which we pick winners by voting. But it's actually a much simpler problem than that, which I think you can see more easily when you see it happening in other countries, and it is, and when you can see what changes in other countries, Republicans here are cheering for abroad. And yes, I think it is easier to see when you can see when it has happened before, what this is descended from in history, because no longer respecting election results isn't just about messing with elections themselves, it's about a different kind of governance, a different kind of power.

If they do not want your vote to determine who is in power, that means they don't wanna have to use power to try to meet your needs. I'll say that one more time. If they do not want it to be your vote that determines who is in power, it means that they don't [01:05:00] wanna have to use power to try to meet your needs, to try to earn your vote. Yes, this is about messing with elections. Yes, this is about minority rule instead of majority rule, but fundamentally, basically, at its very simplest level, this is the big thing that history tells us about. This is the thing that is easier to see in other countries than in our own, but this is a very simple thing. It is about separating power from the preferences of the people, and instead just ruling over the people by force, for their own purposes and to meet their own needs instead of the needs of the people.

If you are trying to get and hold power by force and intimidation and not because the people want you there, that doesn't end well for anyone. Not just in history, not just as a political abstraction, but in terms of how we live and what the prospects are for our families. What are the prospects for you and for your future and for your kids and for their future? Whether or not you care about how it's gone in history, whether or not you care about how it's gone in [01:06:00] history when the antecedents to these folks got in power, whether or not you care about majority rule or minority rule as concepts. Whether you care at all about the isms at the heart of all these discussions. This is about your life.

In a very practical, everyday sense, if there is a party that is trying to cast doubt on elections as the way we choose who's in power, it means they want to stay in power regardless of elections. They want to stay in power without your consent and without your ability to remove them, which means they do not want to serve you, and that means if you want government to do anything at all, to make your family's life materially better, more stable, more dignified, this is a flashing red siren about the abandonment of that task. And it is sometimes easier to see that in far away countries than it is here and close up, and it is sometimes easier to see it in history so we can recognize how it both leads to and rhymes with what we are [01:07:00] going through today.

Final comments on the big problem with small misunderstandings

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today starting with *The Mehdi Hasan Show*, highlighting the GOP and US media, either celebrating or downplaying the danger of fascism in Italy. *The Jacobin Show* explained the right-wing coalition in Italy and how the moderates helped legitimize the far right. *The Mehdi Hasan Show* dove into the details of the Brothers of Italy fascist origins. *The Rachel Maddow Show* looked at how conservatives in the US helped accelerate the extreme right by legitimizing them, starting with the Tea Party. *In The Thick* switched gears and looked at what is at stake in the Brazilian election. *Democracy Now!* spoke with Noam Chomsky about the election in Brazil and broader South American politics. And *The Muckrake Political Podcast* focused on the connection between the American far right, including Steve Bannon, and the election in Brazil.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *The Jacobin Show* tracing a similar story of the far-right party in Sweden getting their [01:08:00] best election results recently. And *The Rachel Maddow Show* did a deep dive on the history of fascism in Europe and the path the world is on right now.

To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at BestoftheLeft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

And now, just a quick note that didn't get covered in the body of today's episode, which is the very strange connection between the Italian Fascist Party

and J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. We talk about this in a fair amount of detail in an upcoming bonus episode for members. So if you're not already signed up, now may be the time for that.

But in short, in post-Mussolini Italy, if you were on the far right, then you needed a way to differentiate yourself from the old far right. It just wasn't politically feasible to try to maintain that same [01:09:00] system or same party. So they had to pivot a little bit. So what they sort of consciously did was went looking for new sets of symbols and themes that they could latch onto. And there aren't too many things out there with more symbols than *The Lord of the Rings*.

Now the problem, as is so often the case very often with the right, though not exclusively, is that they badly misinterpreted the meaning of the story. Tolkien - there's debate over whether he was a racist and white supremacist and that his books were an analogy for separating the races. But my interpretation is that the bulk of the evidence leans towards him being an anti-racist of his era. Meaning it was the early 19 hundreds. Sure he was probably racist about plenty of stuff, but in a world of racists, he was on the "let's not be racist" side of the [01:10:00] spectrum of racism.

So anyway, his books were almost certainly not intended to be interpreted the way the Italian fascists interpreted them. But you know, what's new? So if you didn't know, *Lord of the Rings* is full of lots of different species of intelligent beings, you know, it's a fantasy world. Lots of species. And sometimes they get along, sometimes they're mortal enemies. And the lesson the fascists took from this, the fascists in Italy in particular, was that separateness and specificity in groups is good. And they likened the difference between species in *The Lord of the Rings* to the different countries in Europe.

And hopefully the lapse in logic here is obvious. The different countries of Europe aren't made up of different species. And to make that comparison is inherently dehumanizing to everyone. But still, one can sort of imagine that [01:11:00] this opinion could be arrived at honestly. What one need not be deliberately misusing that text to come to a preferred conclusion. Sometimes all it takes is a small amount of misunderstanding to come to a wildly incorrect assumption.

Now, of course, there are gonna be biases that play a role, and maybe misunderstanding something fits more with your biases. That's all very true and is very likely what happened.

But to give it a totally different and yet similar example, and I used yet another story from my own past in the bonus show, so I won't repeat that one now. But there's a good one from Muhammad Ali, of all people, that fits the bill here. As I said, this happens a lot on the right, but not exclusively. Muhammad Ali was a complicated dude, but he certainly had more friends on the left than the right. We can say that for certain. And he was discussing racism [01:12:00] on a talk show back in the seventies and was asked about integration and interracial relationships. And he, at the time, opposed the romantic mixing of the races. And here's some of the reasoning he gave for that.

MUHAMMED ALI: Why would you want do that?

HOST: Because, because I don't, I don't think I'm any different from you, you see.

MUHAMMED ALI: Yeah, we, yeah, we're much different.

HOST: I mean, I think society's made us different.

MUHAMMED ALI: You know, We are different. We all together.

HOST: Society has made us different.

MUHAMMED ALI: No, not society, God made us different.

HOST: No, no. We're just human beings. He made all of us.

MUHAMMED ALI: Listen. Blue birds fly with blue birds, Red birds on being red birds. Listen, listen. Tell me when I'm wrong. Pigeons wanna be with pigeons. Tell me when I'm wrong.

HOST: We have intelligence they don't have.

MUHAMMED ALI: They don't have intelligence, but yet they stay together. We should have more intelligence than them, right? Buzzards with buzzards. Blue birds with blue birds. They all are birds, but they've got different cultures. The eagles like to hang out in the mountains. The buzzards like to fly around the desert. Well, the blue bird like to fly in the trees and the [01:13:00] glass.

HOST: There are problems with a buzzard mating with a sparrow, wouldn't they?

MUHAMMED ALI: We have the problems too. I didn't see, I don't see, I don't see no black and white couples in England or America walking around proud holding their children.

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Now, to be fair, his answer does get slightly more nuanced than that as he gets into cultural differences. But the fundamental mismatch between species of birds and races of humans is as stark a misunderstanding as thinking of dwarfs, elves, and hobbits as being parallel to the inhabitants or citizens of the countries of Europe.

Now, I'm not sure what the lesson is here. Maybe there's some value in guarding against misinterpretation when creating art, lest it be harnessed for evil purposes that one never intended. But you know, that's a burden that no writer or creator otherwise could fully take on, because if someone is [01:14:00] intent on misunderstanding you, they're gonna go ahead and do it.

Or maybe it's that the fate of the world and our collective fight against fascism actually lies with teachers of literature and critical thinking. Again, that's a heavy burden to put on any relatively small group of people, but, I don't know, if anyone's up to it, maybe it's the teachers of the world.

As always, keep the comments coming in at 202-999-3991 or by emailing me to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben Ken and Brian, for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at [01:15:00] BestoftheLeft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player.

And if you want to continue the discussion, join our *Best of the Left* Discord community to talk about the show or the news or other shows or anything you like. Links to join are in the show notes.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donor to the show from BestoftheLeft.com.