

Brazil's fascist President Bolsonaro tests positive for coronavirus

Tomas Castanheira
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Brazil's fascist President Jair Bolsonaro announced yesterday morning to a group of reporters that he tested positive for the new coronavirus, after first presenting symptoms on Sunday.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already reached catastrophic dimensions in Brazil, with more than 1,600,000 infected and 66,000 dead, according to the official count. This toll is surpassed internationally only by the United States. The impact of the virus continues to expand, with a weekly average of about 37,000 new cases per day.

Amidst this scenario, Bolsonaro used his interview, watched by millions of Brazilians and an international audience, to reaffirm his criminal message on behalf of the entire Brazilian ruling class: "Life goes on, Brazil has to produce, we have to activate the economy."

Bolsonaro reminded everyone that, at first, he was attacked by his political rivals for his sociopathic perspective. "Some people talked in the past, criticizing me, that the economy recovers, life doesn't," he said in direct reference to a phrase by Wilson Witzel, governor of Rio de Janeiro. "The guns were all pointed at me, criticizing me very harshly. We suffered a lot, but now you can all see that we were right".

The positions that Bolsonaro claims have been substantiated are actually a set of unscientific assertions about the nature of the coronavirus and policies in response to the pandemic that have proven completely false and of terrible consequence.

The fascist president's main argument is that the virus is like a "rain" that will inevitably fall on everyone. But, he claimed, the dangers of the disease, which has already killed more than half a million people worldwide, would pose no serious risk to the population.

According to him, COVID-19 was "overestimated"

and "the vast majority of the population, once infected, doesn't even take notice, feels absolutely nothing." He also said that the virus would behave completely differently in the Brazil's hot climate, making its effects much milder.

The explosion of cases before the winter and with devastating consequences in the warmer states, in the north and northeast, absolutely refuted these assumptions, which had no objective foundation from the beginning.

Bolsonaro contends, against all scientific evidence, that hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment for COVID-19 and that "doctors have been saying all over Brazil...that the chance of success of [hydroxychloroquine] reaches 100 percent."

"I took the first pill yesterday," he said. "I confess that if I had taken hydroxychloroquine from the first day...[in a] preventive way, I would have been doing very well, without any trace of reaction."

In reality, not only did the World Health Organization (WHO) abandon studies of the drug for treatment of COVID-19 due to its inefficiency, but two Brazilian health ministers left office because of their differences over the indiscriminate prescription of the drug advocated by the president.

Bolsonaro reaffirmed his denunciation of social-distancing measures as a means of spreading panic among the population, attacking governors who proposed measures such as restricting access to beaches. He defended the reopening of schools and so-called "vertical isolation"—i.e., isolating only the elderly and people with comorbidities.

He defended his practice of "contact with the people, which has been quite intense in recent months," that is, his participation in the fascist demonstrations in front of the Government Palace, advocating the closure of

Congress and the Supreme Court and military intervention.

How much the devastating results of the coronavirus in Brazil can be attributed to Bolsonaro's actions is hard to estimate. His combination of official decrees preventing measures of social distancing and forcing the opening of many businesses; dissemination of false information; covering up data; and the extra-governmental mobilization of openly fascist forces to break the quarantines, and even invade hospitals, played a substantial role.

However, his stability in power and open defense of criminal policies would not have been possible without the collaboration of the entire Brazilian political establishment. If, from the scientific point of view, the policies promoted by Bolsonaro were exposed as a farce, from the point of view of the profit interests of the ruling class, they were completely substantiated.

All parties, including the self-declared opposition of the Workers' Party (PT), embraced the criminal measures of Bolsonaro and are unanimous in promoting the reopening of all economic activities in the country despite all medical and scientific recommendations.

But, as Bolsonaro recalled in his interview, his greatest support comes from the fact that all bourgeois governments around the world are defending his fundamental policy for general contamination of the population, justified in the name of a "herd immunity" that lacks any basis in science. And they all have embraced what he said long ago, "One cannot fight the virus when the collateral effect of this fight is worse than the damage caused by the virus itself."

Just days before Bolsonaro's announcement that he had contracted COVID-19, he attended a July 4th celebration at the US Embassy, where neither masks nor social distancing were in evidence. US Ambassador to Brazil Todd Chapman and his wife have "tested negative and will remain at home in quarantine," according to the embassy's official Twitter account, which added that the embassy's entire staff is being "evaluated."

The episode recalls the visit by Bolsonaro to US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago Florida resort in early March, when 23 members of his entourage returned testing positive for the coronavirus. Bolsonaro previously concealed his own test results, which he performed under pseudonyms.

The virus has increasingly infected Trump's own inner circle, with eight members of his staff testing positive after his Tulsa, Oklahoma, rally, as well as a senior aide to Vice President Mike Pence and the girlfriend of his son Donald Jr.



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