

# Bolsonaro sacks military command to consolidate authoritarian rule in Brazil

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In an action without precedent in the history of Brazil, the country's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro has fired his defense minister along with the uniformed commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force. His unconcealed aim is to secure a total grip over the state in preparation for dictatorial measures against the working class under conditions of a catastrophic worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic and a deepening social and political crisis in Brazil.

Bolsonaro's conflict with the top echelons of the military has emerged in the context of his increasingly strident demands for a complete subordination of the Armed Forces to his government's political agenda, in particular his genocidal herd immunity policy in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the same day as the wholesale change in the senior command of the armed forces, Brazil set a record of 3,668 COVID-19 deaths, as its health care system confronts a nationwide collapse.

On different occasions in recent weeks, Bolsonaro has promoted a confrontation with any social distancing measures implemented by state and municipal governments in response to the record rise in COVID-19 infections and deaths. "My Army is not going into the streets to force people to stay at home," he declared

On Monday, the government announced a cabinet reshuffle affecting six ministries, including the Government Secretariat, the Chief of Staff, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Justice, and the Office of the Attorney General. Defense Minister Gen. Fernando Azevedo e Silva was replaced by Gen. Braga Netto, who previously served as Bolsonaro's chief of staff. After a brief meeting with Bolsonaro, Azevedo e Silva agreed to resign, although he was in fact fired by the president.

In his resignation letter, the general stated that as head of the defense ministry, "I preserved the Armed Forces as state institutions," suggesting that after his removal, this may no longer prove the case.

The commanders' resignations were announced by Braga Netto as soon as he took over the defense ministry on Tuesday morning. The former commander of the Air Force, Antonio Carlos Moretti Bermudez, published a video following the meeting, with a statement that adopted the same theme as Azevedo e Silva. Bermudez declared that he worked for the Air Force as a "state institution" and for the "sovereignty of what is ours: the airspace."

Tuesday was also marked by an offensive on the part of Bolsonaro's allies in the House of Representatives. The leader of the Social Liberal Party (PSL) in the House, Major Vitor Hugo, tried to force a vote on a bill that defines public health emergencies—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—as a motive for decreeing a National Mobilization.

National Mobilizations, which today can be decreed in cases of war, allow the president to intervene in production at public and private companies and subject both civilians and military personnel to his orders. It represents a major concentration of power in the president's hands. Even right-wing figures within the House defined the proposal as a "coup" attempt.

Bolsonaro's unprecedented shakeup of his cabinet and the military high command was carried out on the eve of Wednesday's 57th anniversary of Brazil's 1964 US-backed military coup. Braga Netto's first act as defense minister was to publish a military order of the day calling for the celebration of that political crime, which ushered in two decades of brutal dictatorship.

The order promoted the lie that the military coup was part of a "1964 movement" in response to a "real threat to peace and democracy." This cynical "Bolsonarite" fantasy casts the coup as beginning with a popular movement in the streets that ended up being supported by the Brazilian ruling class and its state, with the armed forces "facing wear and tear" to "guarantee the

democratic freedoms we enjoy today.”

In fact, the 1964 coup was directly engineered and promoted by US imperialism and the Brazilian ruling class. It was not the military that suffered “wear and tear,” but rather the tens of thousands of workers and students that it killed and tortured during the bloody dictatorship that lasted 21 years.

The order, which was read aloud to military personnel in barracks across Brazil on Wednesday morning, is directed at drawing fascistic lessons from this history. It states: “The current geopolitical scenario presents new challenges, such as environmental issues, cyber threats, food security, and pandemics. The Armed Forces are present, on the front lines, protecting the population.”

It is urgent that the Brazilian working class draw its own political lessons from this defeat. Arming itself politically against the increasingly dictatorial methods of the capitalist class is a matter of life and death.

In 1964, the political subordination of the workers to the bourgeois nationalist government of João Goulart, promoted by the Stalinist Communist Party, was instrumental in disarming working class resistance to the coup.

In 1985, when the dictatorship was officially ended, the political forces linked to the Workers Party (PT) worked for a smooth transition to a civilian bourgeois regime, opposing the “persecution” of the military and civilian officials responsible for the barbaric crimes committed against the working class. The political lie that this path represented a settling of accounts with the legacy of military dictatorship has been laid bare by Bolsonaro’s emergence from this political setup.

Today, the same forces historically behind these political betrayals seek to blind the working class to the imminent dangers of the current situation.

Different pseudo-left groups, especially the political heirs of Argentine revisionist Nahuel Moreno, have drawn the same conclusion from the events of the past week: “nothing to see here, move along.”

One of the most grotesque formulations was drawn by Valerio Arcary, one of the main leaders of the former Morenoite organization *Convergencia Socialista*, who held leading posts in the PT. Today, at the head of the “Resistance” tendency within the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), Arcary ridiculed those who are “on the verge of a nervous breakdown” over Bolsonaro’s dictatorial actions, bluntly declaring: “What happened with the ministerial reform is not the antechamber of a self-coup in preparation. ... Big capital does not support a

subversion of the regime.”

The same essential political view is held by the Morenoites of the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MRT), linked to the Argentine Socialist Workers Party (PTS). On their website, *Esuqerda Diário*, they describe Bolsonaro as without support within the military and “harried” by the center-right parties. The site advocates “a more sober conclusion than the analyses that exaggerate Bolsonaro’s coup plot at a moment of clear weakening and disintegration of his bases of support.”

The middle class complacency of these pseudo-left groups, stemming from their unshakable confidence in the eternal stability of the capitalist state, merit only contempt. Bolsonaro’s threats should be taken with the utmost seriousness by the Brazilian working class.

The political reality in Brazil is determined by the profound crisis of the world capitalist system, which is causing the breakdown of bourgeois democracies all over the world, and pushing the ruling class in every country toward dictatorial methods. The January 6 coup in the United States, openly hailed by Bolsonaro and closely followed by his son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, is the most acute expression of this international political shift.

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the fundamental contradictions of capitalism to an explosive level. The brutal increase in social inequality, the devastating effects of the coronavirus throughout Brazil and the dead-end crisis of Brazilian capitalism are the objective driving forces of Bolsonaro’s coup plotting.

However, these same objective factors are creating the conditions for a powerful revolutionary movement of the working class in Brazil and around the world. The working class in Brazil cannot allow another fascist military coup. It must arm itself politically to prevent one.

The struggle against the threat of dictatorship must be joined with the fight to halt the COVID-19 pandemic, and to resolve the social crisis affecting millions of workers. The decisive question in preparing for the coming wave of revolutionary upheavals is the building of a socialist and internationalist leadership in the working class—that is, a Brazilian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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