

Brazil's Bolsonaro orders tanks to roll past Congress as it rejects his new electoral law

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13 August 2021

In a move without precedent since the fall of the 1964–1985 US-backed military dictatorship, Brazil's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro ordered Navy tanks to parade through the capital of Brasilia as Congress met for a vote on his proposed changes to the Brazilian electoral system. Bolsonaro has repeatedly declared that without the adoption of the law, Brazil “will not have elections” in 2022.

The proposed change to the Brazilian Constitution would mandate the attachment of a backup printer to Brazil's electronic ballots. Bolsonaro claims that only paper ballots can guarantee fair elections in 2022, as the electronic voting system would be actively manipulated by the Electoral Court for a return of former Workers Party (PT) President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Under such conditions, Bolsonaro claims, he will not accept the results.

Bolsonaro's claims of vote rigging have been debunked by every major political force, including virtually every political party, the Federal Police, the Attorney General's office, the Budget Court, the Supreme Court and, before his election, the Army itself—which now has endorsed the “printed ballot” proposal as a “legitimate concern” of Brazilians.

The order for the tank column to roll was given on August 6, after the House Speaker Arthur Lira decided he would put the proposal to a vote on the House floor on Tuesday.

According to the official account by the Navy, the parade was designed to formally invite Bolsonaro for yearly exercises conducted at an Army training field in Formosa, to the northeast of the capital, Brasília, at the center of the country and over 1,000 km away from the coast.

In face of what was unanimously seen as a threatening show of loyalty to the would-be dictator Bolsonaro by the Armed Forces, frenzied speculation took over the corporate media during the early hours of Tuesday. Papers demanded that the House trounce the “printed ballot” proposal as a message in defense of democracy.

As the session ended Tuesday evening, however, a different scenario transpired: the proposal won a majority of 229 votes against 218, with 65 absentees and 1 abstention. As a constitutional amendment, the proposal required 308 out of the 513 deputies to support it. The 229 votes were insufficient, but enough for Bolsonaro to consider the vote a political victory,

claiming the absentees and a significant number of those opposed actually supported the proposal, but feared “retaliation” by the supposedly corrupt Electoral Court.

The latest developments make it impossible to overstate the dangers facing Brazilian workers. In itself, the significant support in the House for a proposal that most political parties have formally rejected can only be based upon political calculations that Bolsonaro may indeed succeed in overturning election results by force.

The entire operation being conducted by Bolsonaro is based upon an international coordination of far-right forces, and consciously follows Donald Trump's playbook in the run-up to the January 6 coup attempt in Washington D.C.

Bolsonaro immediately endorsed Trump's claims of election fraud after the November elections, refusing to recognize Biden's victory until December 14. Immediately after the storming of the US Capitol, Bolsonaro declared that “if we don't have printed ballots in 2022, some means to audit the vote, we are going to have a problem worse than in the United States.”

As it was later confirmed, Bolsonaro's son Eduardo, then the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Brazilian House, was a guest at the preparations for the invasion of the United States Congress.

Eduardo Bolsonaro has met multiple times with US fascist organizer and ideologue Steve Bannon, who has described him as one of the leaders of his international fascist alliance, The Movement.

Trump himself tried repeatedly to have a military parade in Washington as he organized the attempt to establish a presidential dictatorship in the United States.

Support for Trump's baseless electoral fraud claims by key Republican officials in the run up to the confirmation session on January 6 played a key role in mobilizing the fascists who later worked as Trump's foot soldiers.

Claiming Tuesday's vote as a moral victory, while charging that those who did not support the printed ballot amendment were fearful of retaliation, Bolsonaro is targeting the Electoral Court for violence by his own foot soldiers, in order to replicate the conditions of the January 6 Capitol invasion.

At the same time, the organization of Bolsonaro's own foot

soldiers is intensifying, with the majority of Brazil's fascist Integralista movement joining the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), the sixth largest political party in Brazil, with over 1.1 million members.

The Integralistas joined the PTB on June 11 in a ceremony featuring the Greek "sigma" letter, used in mathematics for representing a sum, and adopted since the 1930s as a Brazilian adaptation of the Italian *fascio* which originated the name "fascism." The Integralista movement, nowadays led by the Frente Integralista Brasileira (FIB), initially developed in the 1930s and supported the rise of corporatist dictator Getúlio Vargas, before being purged when Vargas consolidated power in 1937. Later, the movement supported the 1964 coup, but had not found a mass party in which to operate since the end of military rule in 1985.

The movement of the fascists is being coordinated with the government, with Bolsonaro's former chief of staff, Gen. Luiz Eduardo Ramos, meeting PTB president Roberto Jefferson on August 4, calling him "a soldier fighting for our freedom." Yesterday, Jefferson was arrested by the Federal Police in connection with multiple threats against the Supreme Court. He threatened the leading judge in the case, Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, declaring things "will now get personal." Moraes is due to take over as the head of the Electoral Court for the 2022 elections.

The ominous prospects for the 2022 elections were spelled out by the senior political analyst at the *Estado de S. Paulo*, William Waack, on Thursday. In an opinion piece defending the need for the military to disobey Bolsonaro, Waack described the script for Bolsonaro's coup: "to defy the Supreme Court, call out his supporters for some kind of 'resistance' on the streets, resulting in conflict, bloodshed, and then the Armed Forces will be summoned to some sort of Guarantee of Law and Order operation."

Waack also reports that military commanders are keenly conscious of the explosive social situation in Brazil, which, he writes, they describe "as a 'social bomb,' with unemployment, misery and inflation which are intolerable for the poorest layers."

Estado de S. Paulo military correspondent Marcelo Godoy also raises the possibility of the military imposing a dictatorship independently of Bolsonaro but using violence surrounding the electoral process as a pretext. He recounts that a significant section of the high command held that if Bolsonaro had died as a result of the attempt on his life in the 2018 campaign the elections would lose their legitimacy, because the results would not be accepted by his supporters.

Chief responsibility for the unfolding of such conspiracies lies with what is deemed as the opposition to Bolsonaro, led by the PT. Its foremost leader, former president Lula, treated the whole process of the vote and the military parade as a non-event.

On Twitter, he reduced the relentless denunciations of the

electoral system and the mobilization of the Armed Forces and the far right by Bolsonaro to "a fuss to draw the attention of the press." In other words, these events should not even be news. The PT's official news report on Tuesday's event was a defense of the military, titled "Military 'parade' shames the Armed Forces, isolates Bolsonaro and becomes a world embarrassment."

Yesterday, a report by the news agency of the PT-affiliated CUT trade union federation cited as a guarantee of democracy in Brazil the "lack of international mood for adventures" such as a coup. It cites a personal appeal by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to Bolsonaro not to attack the Brazilian elections in a meeting on August 5. Never mentioned in the report was the primary reason for Sullivan's visit—to strengthen an alliance against China and ban Chinese firms from Brazil's 5G infrastructure in preparation for a war against the world's most populous nation and soon to be largest economy. Such a war cannot be organized, be it in Brazil, the United States or anywhere else, by democratic means.

The criminal complacency of Bolsonaro's opposition recalls the declarations before the 1964 coup that the Brazilian Army was essentially a democratic force—"which had fought the Nazis," many would emphasize—and would never establish a dictatorship. Such illusions were aptly captured by the description of the 1964 coup as "the day that lasted 21 years." The price was paid in the murder, torture, imprisonment and exile of tens of thousands.

The class roots of the complacency of the PT and its pseudo-left allies lie in their defense of the profit system, whatever their rhetoric about being "socialist" or speaking for "workers." The PT is seeking to chloroform public opinion to the danger of dictatorship, because it fears a mass reaction of workers, which would inevitably target the whole of Brazilian capitalism, more than it fears the threats of Bolsonaro. The military and Bolsonaro himself are conscious that the entire world situation, dominated by unbearable levels of social inequality and the drive to war, is utterly incompatible with democratic forms of rule. They are preparing accordingly.

Workers can only answer these threats by breaking with all the rotten defenders of capitalism, including the PT and its apologists, and building a new revolutionary leadership in Brazil based upon a socialist and internationalist program.



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