

Morenoite-led union organizes “national seminar” with the military in Brazil

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The SindmetalSJC trade union led by the CSP-Conlutas, affiliated with the Morenoite Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), organized a seminar titled “Sovereignty at risk? The future of Brazil’s defense industrial base” on March 27. The event was the most direct demonstration to date of the Morenoites’ reactionary nationalist pro-militarist policy. Seeking a corporatist alliance, they invited military personnel and figures who defend the bloody military dictatorship of 1964-85.

The event was fraudulently promoted by Conlutas as a defense of jobs at the Avibras arms factory in São José dos Campos in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Union leader Weller Gonçalves stated that the event was organized due to “the crisis at Avibras and the lack of effective action by the government to help workers and defend national sovereignty.”

Avibras workers have waged a battle for more than two years for back wages and to secure their jobs. Since September 2022, the company has stopped paying the wages of all workers, and reversed 420 layoffs only after intense opposition. Far from giving any “help” to the Avibras workers, SindmetalSJC staged multiple visits to the Ministry of Defense, while preventing the unity of the fight at Avibras with workers at key industrial sectors such as Embraer and Mercedes-Benz.

The overriding theme of the Conlutas seminar was the subordination of the working class to the Brazilian state in the name of “national sovereignty.” It provided a platform for the defense of the false and intensely reactionary perspective of the “development of national industry” through massive investments in the manufacture of arms.

Along with the participation of figures linked to the arms industry and active military personnel, the most direct expression of this was the guest invited to open the seminar, Robinson Farinazzo. An explicit defender of the military dictatorship, Farinazzo declared that he had a great friendship with Weller Gonçalves.

Farinazzo was introduced as “a reserve officer in the Brazilian Navy, an expert in aeronautical and defense technology” and “a defender of national sovereignty.” Conlutas covered up the most revealing parts of Farinazzo’s politics. In 2022, he posed for photos with New Resistance (NR), a far-right group in Brazil inspired by the fascistic Russian philosopher, Alexandre Dugin, with whom Farinazzo also met that same year.

During his presentation, Farinazzo pointed to a list of arms companies and declared: “In the 1960s and 70s, you had a ton of

companies. We were the China of the world. With 11 percent growth per year, the worker could change jobs whenever he wanted and always earn more.”

Farinazzo praised a decision by the regime under Gen. Ernesto Geisel to stop importing weapons from the United States in 1977. “President Geisel denounced a 1952 treaty that Brazil had with the United States for the purchase of weapons. When Geisel pulled out of that agreement, Brazil had to look inward... it was one of the best decisions of his government to pull out of that treaty.”

According to this narrative, the military dictatorship was a defender of the arms industry and, along with it, of Brazilian workers. However, Farinazzo stated, after the military and civilian governments of the 1980s and 1990s adopted a so-called “neoliberal” economic policy, Brazil’s economy collapsed, leading to the closure of companies focused on the production of tanks and armored vehicles.

Farinazzo’s conception, in which the state’s decision in economic policy fundamentally produced all the consequences of neoliberalism in Brazil, was explained by another guest at the seminar, Army Gen. Ivan Neiva Filho.

The general stated that the fundamental impetus for national industry was the decision of the Portuguese monarchy to build factories for military purposes to defend colonial Brazil two centuries ago. According to Neiva Filho, the arms industry is the essential basis for all industrial and economic development: “The defense industry has a completely different character from other sectors of industry. The BID [Defense Industrial Base] is not a market formation and does not operate according to the usual market norms.”

Amid calls for strengthening the arms industry during the event, Conlutas shrugged off the fact that this can only escalate the threat of war in the region and increase the political power of the same military that conspired with Bolsonaro in the attempted coup d’état of January 8, 2023. Farinazzo and Neiva Filho were applauded by the Conlutas bureaucrats, with Gonçalves declaring at the end that “the event achieved its objective.”

The reactionary conception of Farinazzo and Neiva Filho contradicts the basic elements of economic and social reality, erasing the existence of classes in capitalist society, and justifying the suppression of all social opposition in the interests of the capitalist state.

Far from being merely a decision by capitalist politicians, the destruction of broad industrial sectors in the 1980s and 90s

reflected the breakup of the so-called “import substitution industrialization” policy that had characterized bourgeois nationalist governments in the post-war period in Brazil and other countries in the region.

With the oil crises and the global economic contraction in the 1970s, the military regime pursued an economic policy of investment through indebtedness, accumulating a massive debt that soared from US\$12.5 billion to US\$100 billion between 1974 and 1980.

In 1979, frightened by a wave of strikes and mass protests in the United States and internationally, the Federal Reserve, the US central bank, representing the interests of the American ruling class as a whole, implemented a sharp increase in interest rates, which became known as the “Volcker shock” policy, named after then-Federal Reserve Chairperson Paul Volcker. It resulted in mass unemployment and the destruction of entire industrial regions in the US, and produced shocks throughout Latin America.

The Fed’s increase in interest rates definitively ended the military junta’s policy, accelerating the social crisis and triggering a massive strike movement in the 1980s.

Contrary to what Farinazzo stated, the workers’ strikes that put an end to the two-decade dictatorship were preceded by stagnation and wage contraction, along with an explosive increase in social inequality.

The Workers Party (PT) was created in this period as a preventive trap to block the political mobilization of the working class. With its assistance, the bourgeoisie eventually succeeded in restabilizing Brazilian capitalism and resurrecting bourgeois parliamentary forms of rule.

The economic upheavals of the 1980s expressed profound trends in the global capitalist economy. The development of new methods of production, transport, and financial transactions resulted in the emergence of transnational corporations and global supply chains, which put an end to all policies based on national reformism. They exacerbated the deepening fundamental contradiction of capitalism between the internationally integrated character of capitalist production and the nation-state system.

Ultimately, it was this fundamental objective contradiction of the capitalist system that put an end to the military regime’s economic policy, not mere decisions by individual capitalist politicians, as Conlutas would have workers believe.

The nationalist perspective that Conlutas sought to cultivate in its reactionary event clashes with reality. An undesirable product of “neoliberalism” for the capitalists was the unprecedented international integration and strengthening of the working class. This process also led to the complete discrediting of all labor bureaucracies that had held control over the working class in the post-war period through economic nationalism.

Today, any vestige of support for the Workers Party associated with the social measures implemented in the second half of the 2000s under Lula, has long since given way to social anger against years of social cuts aided by the PT and the union apparatus around it.

Lula in his third term is experiencing the highest rejection rates ever in opinion polls. His government is responding by accommodating the interests of the most authoritarian and

reactionary forces in national politics, currently focused on negotiations for the amnesty of Bolsonaro and the generals who participated in the attempted coup of January 6.

At the same time, Lula is responding to the Trump administration’s tariff war with a reactionary nationalist “Brazil for Brazilians” campaign, seeking to divert social opposition to years of cuts in social programs and price increases. The bankrupt capitalist order is once again producing fascist forces and advocates of a new authoritarian dictatorship, and with the trade war and its shrinking room for maneuver, the Brazilian bourgeoisie will only seek to accelerate this authoritarian drive.

While the nationalist response of Lula and his ministers places the military at the center of national politics, the role played by Conlutas is to stifle the workers’ struggle in favor of the interests of the Brazilian bourgeoisie.

Regardless of the formal statements in defense of workers by the Conlutas leader, the reality is that this Morenoite-led trade union organization will be remembered for providing a platform for figures sympathetic to fascism and aggressive defenders of militarism, the most violent enemies of the working class.

Avibras workers must reject with contempt the corporatist program promoted at the Conlutas seminar, which seeks to subordinate them to the “competitiveness of national industry,” i.e., to the interests of large corporations and international financial capital.

The only viable program for the Avibras workers is to reject reactionary nationalist politics and fight to unite their struggle with those of all workers in Brazil and around the world.

The policy of integration between unions, the state and industry advocated at the Conlutas event stands in direct opposition to the growing social struggles and international solidarity of workers. During the Boeing workers’ strike in the US in October 2024, Embraer workers demonstrated an enormous willingness to go on strike and declared their solidarity with American workers.

Today, the poison of economic nationalism promoted under the Trump administration is already clashing with the social interests of the American and international working class, which is finding expression in a massive opposition movement across the US.



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