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Transition Orderly in Brazil

Military Retreating With Aplomb After 21-Year Rule

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BRASILIA—The political rhetoric depicts the retreat of another exhausted South American army from authoritarian power, abandoning politics for the professional concerns of guns and battlefields.

Brazil's armed forces, however, offer another version of the awaited shift here March 15 to the civilian government of President-elect Tancredo Neves: that of proud commanders stepping aside after a successful mission.

"The presidential election," said a recent Army statement, "is in fact the victory of the revolution of 1964." With preparations for Neves' administration well under way, both public images seem to hold some truth. While formally yielding power to a civilian opposition figure after 21 years of rule, Brazil's armed forces are carrying out less of a withdrawal from government than a gradual shift of profile and influence.

Despite the overwhelming defeat of Paulo Maluf, the candidate of the official party put in place by the military, in the electoral college, up to 14,000 retired officers are expected to retain jobs in the state's ministries and companies.

Rapidly expanding industries in arms and communications will continue to be guided by the military's wishes, political and military sources here say, along with some aspects of foreign policy. Brazil's officers, un-

like their counterparts in Argentina, expect neither purges of top commanders nor investigations and trials on charges of repressive crimes.

Neves, who negotiated with military commanders throughout his campaign for president, even agreed to consult with each of the services before choosing their new commanders, sources said.

"This is not an Army that has been disgraced or defeated," said a military source. "It is one that successfully has negotiated its own way out." The continuing role of the military is seen by some analysts here as a guarantee that the new government will be among the most stable of the reemerging democracies in South America.

"The armed forces and the politicians can cooperate because the military retains a structural role in the state," said Walder DeGoes, a Brasilia-based political scientist. "There has been no break with the past. And Tancredo does not represent an ideological force that threatens the military."

At the same time, the military's strength is expected to limit Neves' margin for change. "The president is not supposed to meddle in military order," said Alexandre de Barros, a Brazilian expert on military affairs. "He can negotiate and he can talk. But he can't give orders."

The dividing line between military and civilian authority already has become one of the most intricately negotiated issues of Neves' awaited administration. The veteran opposition leader reportedly met secretly with the outgoing Army minister, Gen. Walter Pires, three times in the months before the election, as well as with the Army and Air Force ministers and such influential military figures as former president and retired Gen. Ernesto Geisel.

A week before his election, Neves was asked by reporters about a recommendation by one of the parties in his Democratic Alliance that Brazil renew diplomatic relations with Cuba. Such an issue, he responded, "is a problem of national security" that "escapes the political sphere."

An official in Neves' campaign explained later, "that means that relations with Cuba is a key issue for the military."

Two weeks later, it was the turn of the military's chief of staff, Brigadier Waldyr de Vasconcelos, to drop a hint. Asked by reporters how the armed forces would react to the legalization of proscribed communist parties, he replied, "No one would rebel against that. But, of course, the military has a little fear of the Communists—and with good reason."

"These public signals are very important," said Barros. "They are gradually marking out the boundaries of what can be done, what cannot be done, and what can be negotiated."

The military's willingness to accept even such a negotiated delegation of authority to opposition leader Neves did not develop easily. Military leaders harshly condemned the defection of progovernment politicians to Neves' alliance last year, and military intelligence operatives subsequently were shown to be in-

involved in attempts to sabotage and discredit opposition campaign rallies.

Two prestigious Brazilian publications reported last month that hard-line elements in the military had favored a coup preventing Neves' election. The news magazine *Veja* said Neves was so concerned about a coup movement that his staff prepared a detailed contingency plan for organizing resistance and quietly attempted to recruit the support of key commanders.

Several military and political sources here affirmed the reports in general terms but stressed that the military extremists were never close to organizing sufficient support for a rebellion. "The hard line is there, but they are a very small minority," said an informed source. "Some of them see an extreme-left

communist threat in an opposition government. But they know they have no choice but to go along."

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