

NEW STRATEGIES OF RURAL WORKERS IN BRAZIL: SIGNS OF THE PASTORAL LAND COMMISSION

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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that guides our study is that the organizational resources used by the *Pastoral Land Commission* (Comissão Pastoral da Terra, CPT: entity formed by laypeople and progressive religious ones linked to the Catholic Church) insert new strategies and initiatives in agrarian conflicts in Northeast, the most dependent region of Brazil in its relation to the economic power.

Analyzing the participation of rural population in mobilizations and protest meetings, we can notice small proprietors at the side of men without land and of Indians protest against the precariousness of the agrarian politics which they are victims and share their collective aspirations.

In this study the *Pastoral Land Commission* will represent an *Unarmed Force* because your emphasis is educational formation of workers patterned on the ideals to be found in the *Theology of Liberation*. This *Force* exempt from hate against the oppressor and in close touch with domestic and international agencies to buttress the basic rights of the human being and spread hope around.

INTRODUCTION

The process of social-economic transformation, occurred in Brazil, was marked by the strong protagonism of the State supported by agrarian elite; therefore as its consequence, we can verify the exclusion of the common citizen masses of these benefits.

Particularly in the Northeast, a region considered one of the poorest regions in Brazil, from the founding of Superintendence of the Northeast Development, *Sudene* the social and economic differences were amplified, due to the using of financials and fiscal mechanisms and also the establishment of projects from the state in the early of 1959 to 1985. Along *Sudene* news interests had come, with the participation of external funds (investments from companies of south and central-west of Brazil and international ones) which moved the interests previously stacked in the field latifundium-small property, therefore the more serious economical and social problems weren't solved by the state, which had defined others priorities, such as the expanding of input factories in the agricultural section (insecticides, herbicides etc.) aiming at the consumption increase of this section coming from land's proprietors.

As a consequence of poor people's exclusion of the change's process occurred in the Northeast, progressistes groups of Catholic Church, under inspiration of the II Reconcile of the Vatican, started a work of support to the referred classes in the early of 60's.

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Specifically concerning about the problems faced by the workers, were created the *Rural Pastoral* which had developed an educational service, inciting denounce and also resistance, very important elements in the process of workers' political education.

Later on, inserted in *Pastoral Land Commission*, entity founded in 1975, the activities of *Rural Pastorals* didn't suffer discontinuation, keeping the sensitization and mobilization of different social groups, aiming at the support of poor people from rural area. On this way some bishops, priests and laymen related to the *CPT*, started to be in action like some *intellectuals' organic* focus on Gramsci (1985) by the time they put into confront some points of orthodoxy in vigour, instead of producing similar elements.

Recently the context of social conflicts in the Brazilian rural area has presenting with significance frequency signs of news strategies, marked by the emphasis on workers' education and also on the processes of empowerment, sensitisation, conscientisation and articulation. Focus on those two mentioned processes, managed to amplify the solidarity with workers against violence, the impunity and latifundium, in benefit of Agrarian Reform and hydro resources, we shall introduce some of their identifiers aspects.

1. Mobilizations

The mobilizations organized by the *CPT* utilize like protests and vindications, aiming at turning into public the impunity and unsatisfactory initiatives coming from authorities regarding to the oppression suffered by the rural people in face of the owners' of the land power. Frequently problems faced by the rural workers, such as the expulsion of the land, threats and murders are disclosed in a different way, becoming then responsibility of the *CPT* and their allies to sensitize the civil society and the state for the agrarian subject, as well as achieving certain objectives had as necessities to the improvement of rural men life quality. The Campaigns, Forums and Plebiscites accomplished to stimulate the discussion about the theme which is the focus of the attention on that certain moment as well as walks and land's or building's occupation, they constitute the kind of more frequent mobilizations, used as pressure instruments in the conflicts for the land.

Concerning about plebiscites and campaigns accomplished by the *CPT*, it is opportune to stand out the significant repercussion obtained with the plebiscite about *Free Trade Area of the Americas, FTTA* in 2002; the Forum against violence in rural field and the campaign for the coexistence with the semi-arid, initiated in 2003.

Regards to this last one that has great importance to the Northeast region, for supplying concrete alternatives for the survival in the drought periods, one of the largest problems of this region. Throughout this campaign it is defended the idea that is not necessary great projects to solve the problem water's lack, spreading forms for the reception of water from the rain.

We can verify that the accomplishment of those events stimulates articulations with several non-government organs, with teams of the *CPT* located in other areas of the country, getting then to reproduce their voices, mediated by the religious element, by ethics and respect to the justice in the widest sense of the term, surpassing the juridical factor. Seeking support from civil society and also from state, the mobilizations of *CPT* has collaborated in order to make the movement of rural workers more visible to the society.

So, besides participating in the process of change of intellectual and moral direction of a social system (civil society), the confront provoked by the mobilizations, related to the state (in strict sense or *state-coercion*, also called by Gramsci of political society) results in punctual answers, according to the seriousness of the subject.

Determined to get certain supports or decisions from civil society and state, the CPT has been cooperating to define a new intellectual and moral direction, aspects that can be verified beyond the people's increase that are participating in its initiatives, plus the support- even modest- of means of communication.

Standing out the importance of using means communication in mobilizations, The Bishop of São Félix do Araguaia, Dom Pedro Casaldáliga (2002) ennobles:

"I always remember what Jesus said to his apostles, which what they were hearing, in the ears secrets, they should proclaim of the top of the roof. The roofs today are the means of communication. They are large roofs".

In the research done for the present study, we can verify the following peculiarities in the mobilizations coordinated by the CPT:

- a) Objectivity (definition in a rational way of mobilizations causes and claims);
- b) Caution (lots of time interpreted by groups from MST - Movement of Rural Workers without land-, by rural union and political groups as *"a slowly and inefficient work"* or *"a kind of work with a plenty of prayers"*);
- c) No-violence (emphasis on the value of arguments, compared with the physical force);

2. Articulation with national and international entities

Having the support of lots of national and international entities able to amplify the spread of denounces about right's violation of rural worker's, the CPT with the help their articulations have been demonstrating that the international observer's presence corroborate with the decrease of violence's agents against poor people from rural area.

We can exemplify with an occurrence initialized in Cruz do Espírito Santo (PB), with some trials of incriminating the support activities to the rural worker, executed by Priest Hermínio Canova, Sister Antônia Van Ham and another members from CPT. Because of the prison's threat of the referred religious people, in 2000, Xavier Plassat (2000) from Tocantins, clamoured for solidarity, throughout the Internet, going to "the ocean of Dominicans brothers and sisters":

"...Dear friends and brothers/sisters: I dare send this bottle into our Dominican ocean... (...) it contains a call for solidarity to our companions of the Paraíba's Pastoral Land Commission in north- eastern Brazil. They are presently prosecuted for their evolvment and assistance towards the landless people, in their struggle for land. They risk serious condemnation to prison (...) thank you for any thing you may do in order to help our companions and extend this solidarity-net".

Sincerely yours, Xavier Plassat, o.p.

As well as has happened with the religious from Paraíba, the Pastoral Land frequently spread information related to conflicts seriousness, beyond propitiating influences in the defence of prosecutes which try to accuse honest people for crimes they didn't committed. With the help means of communication, and particularly with aid of Internet, some solidarity manifestation occur, beyond pressure, with the aim of

taking good decisions to the land's conquer and good life conditions in the statement or area of camp seats .

Such articulations enable the participation of meetings and manifestations in national and international ambits with similar entities, beyond the ideas intensification about the fight's globalization, solidarity and hope like a way that can guarantee the producing of food, with the aid of the land's conquer.

Beyond the necessities contacts with rural unions, *Movement of Workers Landless-MST*, *National Confederation of Workers in Agriculture*, *Contag* and some political groups, like organs linked to the Catholic and Lutheran churches, maintain articulations with several organizations non-governmental such as:

- *Center of Global Justice* branched to the *Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme*, founded in 1922 in France;
- Food first Information and Action Network, *FIAN* , international organization of human rights, coming from German in 1986, with performance in Brazil in events where the workers 'family are wrongly retreated of the lands, which contributes to their support and survival.
- *Rede Social de Justiça e Direitos Humanos* – headquartered in São Paulo, this organization aims to respond a demand of actions and articulations based on denounces of Human rights violation occurred in Brazil.
- *Via Campesina*- international net of peasant's movements, that agglutinates landless workers, indigenous population, small and medium proprietors, aiming at building a peasant movement strong and solidary.

From 2000 this organization has marked the April 17th as the international day of rural fight, due to the massacre against nineteen peasants from *Eldorado dos Carajás* (Brazil) occurred on April 17th, 1966. Denouncing threats, arbitrary prisons and murders of rural workers, the *Via Campesina* congregate movements from Central America, South America, Europe and Asia, working in partnership with *FIAN* and *CPT* in the coordination of Global Campaign for the agrarian reform in Brazil, founded in April 17th, 1998.

The articulations of *CPT* with organs linked to the defense of Human Rights were improved from 1991, when the *Right Livelihood Foundation*, headquartered in Stockholm, granted to the *Pastoral Land* the *Alternative Nobel* prize to the peace, as a recognizing of its contribution to the construction of a democratic society, defending rural workers. During the Reward's ceremony, the person who represented the *Pastoral Land* stood out:

["...at this joyful time- when we feel honored by this award- we want to call attention to the rural violence reality and its impunity because of the total lack of action or even agreement of responsible government's institutions; the slavery and the semi- slavery situation to which are submitted many rural workers at large farms and agro business corporations; the illegal arrest of many peasants who are struggling for their rights; unjust land and wealth distribution, which exclude the great majority of Brazilian population and the lackness of an agricultural policy, hidden under a federal government's demagogic speech and propaganda which shows no political will to take concrete steps to solve social problems".] Boletim Pastoral da Terra, dez/1991.

Although receiving worldwide rewards, the *CPT* in Brazil keeps stimulating mobilizations and promoting articulations in order to sensitize more social segments as defence of agrarian reform, and consequently they be able to stop or decrease the

violence in Brazilian rural areas. For 28 years this entity has building solidarity net, with the perspective of constructing a society with social justice.

Conclusions

In the last ten years the influences of *Pastoral Land Commission* are quite perceptible and verified through the rural workers reactions during the conflicts against land's owners. One of the most important signs of this influence we can verify the power of argument on the work's rights; the hope for better days, which has given to them the resistance to face the oppressor and the net of solidarity among several peasants organizations dispersed around the rural world, mobilized and articulated with the support of *CPT*.

Let us see some testimonies from workers facing a conflict situation, which illustrates this fact:

José Cicero de Melo - rural worker from Engenho Prado, Pernambuco.

In July 07th, 2003 the agricultures from Prado decided in a assembly, that would left the place arrested or dead. Disposed to face the police, which surround the camp with motorcycle and at night overly the area with agricultural planes, José Cícero, coordinator of the camp affirmed:

[“... *our most powerful weapon is the determination of not leave the land which is already considered ours...*”] *Jornal do Commercio*, 08/07/2003 Recife, p.8-B)

Luiza Cavalcanti - rural worker from Tracunhaém, Pernambuco

In a assembly occurred beside the Highway PE-42, the rural workers landless camped in Engenho Prado decided to resist to any judicial order of retreat.

[“*We will resist. They have destroyed our workers material, however they haven't destroyed our capacity of mobilization and union*”] – said Luiza. *Jornal O Globo*, 07/07/2003,p.7.

[“*This land belongs already to us, we are just waiting that the President Lula sign the dispossess ordinance*”] – affirmed Marluce Melo, adviser of *CPT O Globo*, 7/07/2003, p.7.

With the help of some testimonies marked by characteristics based on faith and reason, we can verify that the activities from *CPT* take to certain acting's, which correspond in a perspective of Gramsci guideline of position's war.

Among the Gramsci's criteria to solve crisis situation, we have to remember that daily fights for the conquest of space and position, the involvement of great masses in the solution of the problems in focus, without getting lost of view the final objective, related to the end of capitalist social economic formation. In those situations the author reminds that the requested actions demand exceptional qualities of patience and inventive spirit. Therefore, in a war of position that crosses a hegemony crisis, Coutinho (1999) says : “*there is no place to the great day*”.

It is important to stand out that in the ambit of *CPT* the combat to the capitalism (element very constant in its conquest process of hegemony) has as final goal of its trajectory of fights, the Kingdom of God, whose signs of hope we can verify nowadays.

So, in this context of hegemony conquest, with the use of organized resources such as the education, the mobilization and articulation of a new dimension is defined and disseminated in the context of he social fights of field. We will designate in this

work like *force unarmed* that representative synthesis of the performance of *CPT* constituted basically for an educational process that embraces one explanatory analyze of the social reality e for mobilizations and articulations capable of denouncing openly some situations which there is the absence of justice and to strengthen the solidarity.

It is indispensable to stand out that not only n the acting of its pedagogic function , but also in their mobilizations and articulations it is present a mystic, based on the liberation theory, which that strengthens the fight walk n search of its larger goal. Throughout this aspect, we must make reference to the fact highlighted by the pastoral agents which *CPT* support or condemn the society models, under human aspect, in the measure in that approach or they stand back of the designs of God. It doesn't totally identify itself with one or another determined model, always relative and not perfect.

This Commission doesn't present a ready society model or society standard. It accompanies the rural worker in its expectative, projections, crisis, being in the expectation that they indicate the model and build the society adapted to its needs.

Synthesizing the difficulties faced during the trajectories of those that are part of this Pastoral, Casaldáliga (2003-A) affirms that the *LCP* "... *dream the impossible dream and make come true daily the possible*".

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