



**GRAMSCI IN THE MIDST OF BRAZIL'S
LANDLESS WORKERS' MOVEMENT (MST):**
AN INTERVIEW WITH MST *MILITANTE* NEURI ROSSETTO



Dossier n° 54
Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research
July 2022

The photographs featured in this dossier – edited by Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research’s art department – are portraits of living culture expressed through the art, education, agricultural cultivation, popular communication, and mass mobilisations of Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST). Each photograph contains a portrait of those who struggled before us, who continue to feed our struggles today: Rosa Luxemburg on a banner, Carlos Marighella on a samba drum, Carolina Maria de Jesus on a flag, Zumbi dos Palmares on a wall, Frida Kahlo on a canvass, Bruno Pereira and Dom Phillips on a stage, Che Guevara on a shed in the countryside, and, of course, Antonio Gramsci himself overlooking a *mística* in progress. The images, just as the text of the dossier, share the concrete experiences of a movement fed by Gramsci’s ideas as it sows the seeds for the creation of a new human being and the transformation of society.

COVER

Photograph by Mídia Ninja

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Photograph by Coletivo de Comunicação do MST no Norte do Paraná
(‘Communication Collective of the MST in North Paraná’)

Introduction

Despite the persistent hegemony of capitalism and its ruling neo-liberal ideology, various forms of resistance, social struggle, and proposals for an emancipated future continue to emerge. This is taking place in the face of economic, political, social, and environmental crises as well as a continuing lack of vision of how to overcome the health crisis. Our intellectuals must put their hearts and souls precisely into this orientation toward the future, one based on the possibility of change and hope for human emancipation, as we argued in Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research dossier no. 13, *The New Intellectual*. We must create innovative proposals on how to use our social wealth to resolve the immediate problems faced by humanity, such as hunger, poverty, disease, and climate catastrophes, and study and familiarise ourselves with the resistance and struggles that emerge in all corners of the world; such proposals, in a draft form, are available in dossier no. 48, *A Plan to Save the Planet* (developed with the Network of Research Institutes). We must also challenge ourselves to be creative in developing possibilities for cooperation, solidarity, and social and cultural enrichment among peoples.

The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was already aware of the role of new intellectuals who, in actively participating in political organisations, dedicated themselves to developing popular consciousness and creating space for popular struggles to thrive. It is in this context that we want to revisit the work of Gramsci and

the relevance of his legacy for our struggles today, reinforcing the Battle of Ideas, and – as Fidel Castro and José Martí said – recognising that the struggles within the various cultural and intellectual institutions are as important as the struggles in the streets, which go hand in hand and feed off of one another. That is why it is important to bring to the fore contemporary social experiences that are inspired by this legacy and that dialogue with Gramsci's ideas: so that we might build the seeds of hope for this new world in real life. We use hope not only in the sense of orientation toward the future, but also in the sense that Paulo Freire taught us, of 'giving hope' (*esperançar*). This means to lift oneself up, to pursue and take forward, to join with others to build new social forms. Faced with the current social reality, it is in the enactment of this phrase that humanity's alternative path lies.

Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST) – the largest militant, popular movement in Latin America – works to create this hope every day. The MST emerged at the start of the 1980s, rapidly transforming the peasant struggle into a tool to challenge authoritarianism in the midst of the military dictatorship which ruled Brazil at the time. Its actions, which go well beyond the struggle for land, include the pursuit of agrarian reform in order to democratise access to land and produce healthy foods as well as the fight for social justice. Today, approximately 500,000 households in the countryside are members of the MST. Some live on encampments (*acampamentos*) – land occupations in the throes of demanding access to fallow land – while others live on settlements (*assentamentos*) – meaning that they have already won land ownership through struggle. These families continue to organise themselves

in a participatory, democratic, and inclusive structure on local, regional, state, and national levels.

With this in mind, and in order to better understand the importance of Gramsci and his legacy for the construction of this popular movement, our dossier no. 54, *Gramsci Amidst Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST)*, features an interview with Neuri Rossetto, a member of the national coordination of MST. Rossetto made a point of highlighting, firstly, that he does not consider himself to be an expert in Gramsci's thought; he is merely a *militante* – a cadre of the MST – and an admirer of Gramsci who aims to bring to popular movements some of the tremendous and invaluable contributions that this Italian thinker made to working-class revolutionary movements.

Reflecting on Gramsci's legacy and its contemporary contributions, Rossetto believes that there are three main challenges ahead of us: to precisely identify the adversaries who impede efforts to address the dilemmas of humanity (such as agrarian reform), to establish an ongoing dialogue with the working class to build a political project for each country, and to strengthen the political and organisational capacity of the main forces who advance our struggles.

As the motto of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, a magazine led by Gramsci, Angelo Tasca, Palmiro Togliatti, and Umberto Terracini, put it in 1919: 'Educate yourselves because we will need all your intelligence. Rouse yourselves because we will need all your enthusiasm. Organise yourselves because we will need all your strength'.

Renata Porto Bugni, the deputy director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, interviewed Rossetto in 2021. An earlier version of this dossier was published in *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power*, a journal supported by GramsciLab. For this dossier, we are grateful to the partnership of GramsciLab and the Centro per la Riforma dello Stato (CRS), both of which are members of the Network of Research Institutes.





Photograph by Mídia Ninja

 *How important was Gramsci's legacy in shaping the MST's struggle? Do you believe that Gramscian thought is still useful today for building social and political organisations to transform society?*

For us in the MST, a mass social movement formed by rural workers who advance the struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil, Antonio Gramsci's contribution is invaluable and extremely necessary for understanding the current moment and the complexity of bourgeois society. From a socialist perspective, overcoming the bourgeoisie requires an ever clearer and more contemporary understanding of bourgeois society's functioning and reproduction. In addition, paths to political action for subaltern classes must be uncovered based on an understanding of bourgeois society's own contradictions.

The MST has always been clear in its understanding that the success of the struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil will not only come from the strength and political actions of rural workers and peasants. Democratising ownership and access to arable land requires mobilising wider sections of society in defence of this idea and placing agrarian reform – and the question of the Brazilian agricultural development model as a whole – at the heart of a political-economic project that meets the needs and interests of the majority of the Brazilian people, not those of the capitalist class. In this sense, Gramsci's contributions alert us to the daily struggle for hegemony and the pressing need for a societal project to be built around the centrality of workers' struggles. This is the path we are trying to create.

With these objectives in mind, we have a triple challenge:

1. to identify and define the main enemies of agrarian reform, just as Gramsci did with the forces of fascism;
2. to establish a permanent dialogue with the working-class forces of civil society in order to build a consensus around a political project for the country; and
3. to raise the level of organisation and politicisation of our social base.

Consequently, we can cite three examples of how Gramsci's vast and invaluable political-theoretical contributions are both relevant and critical for popular movements to shape themselves into protagonists in the class struggle today:

1. to understand how the state works, in the wider sense, as well as its attempts to gain control of the conflicts provoked by a society divided into classes;
2. to look to civil society, which offers potential for subaltern classes to open new and varied lines of struggle against the domination of a minority over the majority; and
3. to continuously challenge ourselves to be a political force, holding the Gramscian concept of hegemony as a reference point.

 *According to Gramsci, civil society is composed of what he calls private hegemonic apparatuses, which are institutions for legitimising power such as schools, the Church, trade unions, and the media, among others. How is the performance of civil society, faced with the government of Jair Bolsonaro in the midst of the pandemic, being evaluated? How is the movement interacting or dialoguing with these institutions on the frontline and strengthening civil society?*

Unfortunately, society still remains inert in the face of the humanitarian tragedy sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated by the genocidal policy of President Jair Bolsonaro's government. There is an impression that society has normalised the thousands of deaths that occurred – and, on a smaller scale, still occur – every day because of the pandemic, though it should be noted that this immobility of the population precedes the pandemic period. Brazil is one of the most socially and economically unequal countries in the world. Thousands and thousands of poor people – especially among the Black population – are killed every year by police forces. The state's public policies have become increasingly absent in the growing agglomerations of *favelas* in urban centres. So, social immobility in the face of the pandemic and of this genocidal government must be seen in this context: one which structurally makes martyrs of the poor.

However, there have been encouraging and growing signs that this social lethargy is starting to be overcome as social mobilisations take place in urban centres. As to our activities, the MST adopted 'saving lives' as its main objective in early 2020, when the COVID-19

pandemic began in Brazil. We have organised ourselves around that banner along four lines of struggle:

1. **Taking precautions during the pandemic** by: a) adopting the guidelines and preventive care measures recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) within our social base; b) demanding that the vaccine be a universal right for all people; c) calling on the Brazilian government to provide emergency economic aid so that the population would have the conditions to stay at home for the duration of the pandemic; d) defending and valuing public health through Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS).
2. **The solidarity brigades**, which distribute food donated by rural settlements fighting for agrarian reform and, together with other progressive organisations in society, organise community kitchens to distribute at least one meal per day to the unhoused population in large urban centres. In the state of Pernambuco alone, more than 720 tonnes of food and 600,000 meals were distributed from 2020–2021. There has been no indication that agribusiness, which monopolises land, public funding, and technical assistance for agro-export production, has made any food donations to the poor. In some states, principally in Northeast Brazil, brigades were formed to visit, assist, distribute food, and provide care to poor families on the outskirts of cities.
3. **The *Fora Bolsonaro* ('Get Out, Bolsonaro'), a Genocidal Government! campaign**: We have a militarised

government that, since the beginning of the pandemic, has systematically positioned itself against science, against WHO guidelines and against access to vaccines, thereby becoming principally responsible for the more than 650,000 deaths caused by COVID-19 in the country. In 2021, the Saving Lives Campaign demanded the removal of the genocidal President of the Republic, Bolsonaro, from office and that he be held criminally responsible for the thousands of deaths that took place.

4. The **tree planting campaign** began months before the pandemic but has taken on even greater importance during this exceptional period, one which has prevented us from carrying out actions that involve large gatherings of people. Our goal is to plant 100 million trees around the country over 10 years, starting in early 2020. In the first two years of the plan alone, we managed to plant two million trees and build 100 units of the Popular Nurseries Network around the country. The objective is to make progress in environmental recovery and preservation within our communities.

It is common knowledge that irrational capitalist development threatens life and the planet because it promotes environmental destruction in pursuit of maximising profit rates. Thus, these four lines of struggle allow us, on a daily basis, to dialogue and promote political exchange with civil society as well as to oppose the prejudices dictated by the private apparatus of hegemony against rural workers and their struggles.



Photograph by Wellington Lenon / MST-Paraná

 *During the pandemic, we have seen that health, economic, and political crises can create openings for popular protest and mobilisation to build an alternative hegemony. What is the movement's analysis of these crises in the country, and what are the possible consequences and alternatives being created?*

We are living in a structural crisis of capitalism that precedes the pandemic. Structural crises are periods of change in which new forms of capitalist accumulation emerge – unlike cyclical crises, which result from capitalist overproduction, or the final crisis, which is characterised by the collapse of capitalism. They are periods of great and profound change which generate political, economic, social, and environmental crises. These crises accelerate the concentration of income and wealth, consequently increasing social exclusion and poverty across all continents. To add to this, the insane and frenzied capitalist exploitation of natural resources causes environmental destruction that threatens life on the planet. In other words, capitalism is showing itself, socially, to be increasingly inhuman, unjust, and incapable of promoting an egalitarian, solidaristic, and democratic society.

We are living in a period of global instability, foreshadowing the changing of eras. These crises open up historic possibilities for the subaltern classes to challenge bourgeois society and to consolidate victories from the perspective of a socialist society.

The MST, along with the Via Campesina – a global movement of peasants, indigenous people, and migrant and rural workers – is already marching forward in a struggle that is vehemently

anti-capitalist. They are doing this by insisting that natural resources must be excluded from the logic of the market and that they be controlled socially, and that food must cease to be a commodity and instead become a universal right. They wave the food sovereignty banner of all peoples. They defend seeds as humanity's heritage and demand pesticide-free food production. These struggles, while emerging in opposition to capitalism, also represent, in an embryonic form, a new society, or a new hegemony.

In this scenario of global instability, there is also a dispute for world hegemony between the United States and China. Even though it maintains unquestionable military superiority, the US is in decline, while China is rising as a world power. We believe that historic breaches are opening up here as well for the emergence of a new world order. Through the International Peoples' Assembly (IPA), we are fighting for a world free of imperialist countries, free of wars and hunger, which promotes environmentally sustainable, socially just, egalitarian, and democratic economic development. We are fighting for a socialist humanity.

Consequently, the IPA is promoting its 3rd Seminar on the Dilemmas of Humanity – Dialogues between Civilisations with the aim of discussing post-pandemic emergency measures and defining struggles that point toward a post-capitalist world. The activities carried out will culminate in a large-scale internationalist event held on the African continent in 2023, where the peoples of all continents will be represented.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the failure of neoliberal policies worldwide, in particular in the area of health, with the glaring inability of commercial medicine to cope with a pandemic. Meanwhile, governments that adopted policies in defence of life and instituted emergency economic measures to ensure decent living conditions for their people not only had greater success in confronting the pandemic, but they are also emerging faster and stronger from the economic crisis generated by COVID-19. The pandemic, at an immeasurable cost of hundreds of thousands of lives, gave us the possibility to strengthen our struggle in defence of public policies on health, housing, basic sanitation, education, gender rights, caring for nature, and so on – in short, of public policies that promote human dignity.

To synthesise, the structural crisis of capitalism and the global crisis generated by the pandemic have opened up historic possibilities both for struggles that meet immediate emergency demands and for those that reclaim socialist utopia as an ideal of future society. Time will tell how much the subaltern classes have been able to take advantage of the breaches that are opening up today in the history of humanity.



Gramsci stresses the important task that political parties have in modern society, namely to create the grounds for intellectual and moral reform so that a new national-popular collective will can be developed. Has the MST taken on this role in Brazil?

The MST is a popular movement composed of rural workers and peasants whose immediate agenda is the struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil and to guarantee dignified living conditions for those who are already living on settlements. Throughout our existence, we have become increasingly convinced that this struggle cannot be carried out in isolation in the countryside, nor is it limited to the bourgeois order. As such, the movement has expanded its network of social and political relations, seeking allies in this task both in the countryside and in the city, thereby becoming an ally in many other struggles which are necessary to confront bourgeois society.

Neoliberal economic globalisation and the international division of capitalist production have subordinated Brazil's economic development to an export-oriented platform for raw materials. This has made it unviable for there to be agrarian reform in the country which would also attend to the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie and would, at a minimum, distribute land to peasants to produce raw materials for industry and to strengthen the internal market. But not even that happened. The bourgeoisie, which monopolises land, is only concerned with the interests of the external market.

So, the MST tasked itself with reworking its proposal for agrarian reform, systematised in its programme for popular agrarian reform, in which it argues for an agricultural model centred on the

production of healthy food for the Brazilian population alongside the struggle to democratise land ownership. This current complexity of the struggle for agrarian reform, both in terms of popular demands and its political scope, has required the development of new proposals for agriculture, organisational upskilling, and a broad range of national and international allies.

We are aware of the responsibilities and the need to improve our political forces, both in their organisational and ideological senses, in order to have a greater influence in the class struggle. However, we do not claim to assume the role of a political party in its strict sense, as we believe that this political instrument is beyond our scope. This does not mean to say that we have a supra-partisan or non-partisan stance. We believe that the articulation of working-class movements, trade unions, and political parties is fundamental in the construction of another sociability which is alternative and contrary to the bourgeois order.



Photograph by Matheus Alves

 *Gramsci was not an ivory tower intellectual. He was very politically active before his imprisonment, and his intellectual output was a product of the consensus and dissensus he encountered in his life. It is notable that a broad social movement such as the MST has been able to develop this intrinsic connection between practice and theory. Tell us more about the importance of this praxis today.*

This is a permanent and dynamic challenge, as with any other dialectical relation. A friend of the MST, Professor José Paulo Netto, carefully explained the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, which are two sides of the same coin. For theory, the acquisition of knowledge is an end; for practice, it is a means of improving political action. The criterion for theory is truth; for political action, it is the correlation of forces. The time for theory is indefinite and the time for political action is in the moment.

So, how is it possible to think of one or the other separately? Or, even how to think of one being prioritised over the other? We need theory and knowledge in order to improve our political action. But knowledge alone, isolated from political action, becomes a dead force. At the other extreme, Lenin's warning is fitting: 'Without revolutionary theory, there is no revolutionary movement in the true sense of the word'. Here, the warning given by Palmiro Togliatti, Gramsci's comrade and a leader of the PCI (Italian Communist Party), also holds true: whoever makes a mistake in analysis makes a mistake in political action.

Based on the legacy of the great thinkers of the working class and popular struggles, we always seek to consolidate the knowledge

acquired with practical action at any time or place. It would be useless for us to adopt the liberating knowledge of the educator Paulo Freire if we did not implement it in the schools in our settlement and encampment areas. The same goes for knowledge in agroecology: this knowledge is only realised when it is put into practice in the cultivation of food. It would be of little use to memorise Lenin's extraordinary *What Is to Be Done?* if we did not have the ability to understand its message for political action in accordance with our times and our reality.

So, in all our areas of activity, we seek to achieve a complementary relationship between theory and practice in a permanent way – I emphasise again – with its dynamic character in mind. This duality-unity demands permanent vigilance and persistence on the part of the organisation.

Lastly, we do not underestimate the importance and strength of political action and popular mobilisations as an educating element for the subaltern classes. The popular masses learn and educate themselves in popular mobilisations. There, in the mass movement, lies the political strength of the organisation; this is where the political-ideological level of the masses is raised.

 *Could you tell us more about the formative processes of raising consciousness through the practices of the movement? How is Gramsci's idea of the organic intellectual understood and practised by militants?*

The answer to this question is found, initially, in the wording of the previous question: Gramsci was not an ivory tower intellectual. But I believe that the first example of an organic intellectual was Karl Marx. The German philosopher, with his complex and brilliant work, was constantly concerned with how to adapt the method by which he explained his research to the working class. At least three central concerns guided the way in which he presented his work: 1) to be better understood by workers; 2) the certainty that only the working class could transform scientific knowledge into a tool for class struggle; and 3) the need to promote a synthesis between theory and political practice.

Regarding Lenin, it is enough to recall that Gramsci considered him, together with Marx and Engels, to be one of the founders of the philosophy of praxis. But, certainly, besides his historic trajectory as a party leader, the triumph of the 1917 Revolution under his leadership gave Lenin the unquestionable merit of being a philosopher of praxis.

The Marxist thinker Michael Löwy tells us that the intellectuals that the working class needs are those who take up the responsibility of transmitting the heritage of critical and revolutionary thought. These intellectuals must also have the ability to analyse the dynamic structures of bourgeois society and the functioning

and capacity of capitalism to renew itself, as well as the ability to propose alternatives. They must also have the ability to learn from popular movements.

For the Gramscian Guido Liguori, in Gramsci's work one never finds an exaltation of the people or of subaltern subjects as they currently are; if subaltern subjects are as they are, Liguori contends, but also want to become hegemonic, they must first transform themselves and acquire class consciousness. How to turn the subaltern strata into a class or a class alliance? Liguori replies: a group of conscious leaders must educate the masses, otherwise they will remain stationed at the level of spontaneous common sense – a limited, insufficient, and intrinsically subaltern level.

We, of the MST, draw on all this knowledge bequeathed to us through struggles for human and social emancipation and by those who have developed critical and revolutionary thought. Drawing on this legacy, we systematise our understanding of the organic intellectual and their role in the class struggle. For us, the working class itself must shape its own intellectuals through formal education, political training, and popular and class struggles. This intellectual has the task of contributing to educating and organising the class around a political project and the construction of hegemony, and, furthermore – to cite Liguori again – of helping subaltern social strata to acquire a critical sense and class consciousness and to overcome common sense. Finally, the dynamism of the ever more complex class struggle will, over time, impose the need to renew and adapt the attributes and profile of the organic intellectuals that the working class needs.



Photograph by Juliana Adriano

 *Gramsci wrote his Prison Notebooks during a moment of defeat. He wanted to figure out why the working class defected from the hegemony of unions and left parties in favour of fascist organisations. Could you reflect on Gramsci's observations on this drift?*

It is true that the working class was living through a period of defeat when Gramsci was writing in prison. However, in Gramsci's analysis, the dominant social segments were also fragmented during this historical period in relation to the subaltern classes. There were contradictions and differences between the dominant segments that were so profound and complex that they threatened these segments' hegemony over society.

There was, therefore, a need for the political unification of bourgeois domination. For Gramsci to become aware of this need was an acute discovery on his part of the dominant hegemony's fragility in that moment. The complexity and richness of Gramsci's perspective on his historical moment and on the role that fascism played in re-establishing the command and hegemony of the dominant class, which had been weakened after World War I (1914–1918), emerges from this political relation. The extraordinary Cuban Marxist thinker Fernando Heredia always reminded us that the key to domination is the moment of *consensus* and not of *coercion*. By resorting to fascism, which is a historical construction, the bourgeoisie sought to restore the centrality of its interests over Italian society.

In this historic moment, segments of the dominant class, with the support of the big landowners and big industrial capital, sought to

obtain the consent of the petite bourgeoisie for its project of fascist domination. These dominant segments, with their fascist project, promoted reactionary subversion – something that aligns well with the Gramscian concept of passive revolution, a process that appears to be revolutionary but simply does not change the structure of society and the state. Faced with a fragmented and weakened bourgeois order, it is not difficult to understand the building of consent toward a political project that carries a message of transformation and that opens a possibility for the future which attends to the anxieties of a people – even if this project is of a reactionary and coercive nature. Thus, the petite bourgeoisie, orchestrated by the state and capitalist associations, felt itself to be the protagonist of political, fascist events.

From this line of thought, Gramsci develops his entire theory about the sphere of politics and the relations that are built in this sphere through the struggle for hegemony. He also finds that this hegemony is inherited through ideological-cultural elements and describes the ways that fascism uses these elements in the process of domination.

Therefore, for Gramsci, the struggle for human and social emancipation demands that the most excluded and oppressed disadvantaged subjects organise collectively and push for a rupture with the dominant consensus. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, added to this task by saying that subaltern classes must acquire the ability to carry out a critical unveiling of reality by recreating their way of ‘reading’ the world, becoming protagonists of their own history and the subjects of transforming their reality.

Finally, one of Gramsci's most beautiful reflections is that hegemony is a process that expresses organised consciousness and values around a political project.



Photograph by Igor de Nadai

 *One of Gramsci's principle strategic concepts is that of the 'historic bloc', Gramsci's strategy for hegemony. Could you reflect on the process of constructing such a historic bloc in the Brazilian context?*

This question allows me to add to the Gramscian concept of hegemony, as I emphasised in the last answer. For Gramsci, the conquest of hegemony was never abstract, limited merely to the field of ideas, consciousness, or idealised values. Anchored in the historical materialist method that was so well elaborated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Gramsci highlights that the process of attaining hegemony occurs within society's infrastructure – in other words, in its economic structure, or, more precisely, in the relations of production.

That is what happened with fascism in that historic moment. It achieved hegemony because it sought to respond to various economic, cultural, ideological, and political processes. And that is how, through the petite bourgeoisie, the state and capitalist associations achieved the consent as well as the ability to steer the dominated classes. It should be emphasised that this was never a total hegemony; there was significant resistance from parts of the working class.

Nothing is more elucidating than the Gramscian formulation that the hegemony of the working class begins on the factory floor. This is where the working class acquires the consciousness of an ethical-political moment and develops a consciousness of itself, a class consciousness, through its economic and corporative struggles. So,

hegemony is the capability that a given political force has to build consensus around a political project. It is this political project that demonstrates the need for a historic bloc so that the working class can achieve hegemony.

In Brazil, we are living through a long period of dissensus within the working class, a period that began in the 1990s and continues today. On the other hand, the structural crisis of capitalism has made clear the Brazilian bourgeoisie's inability to feed the popular imagination in order to guarantee itself electoral victories and maintain command of the country. The four consecutive victories of the Workers' Party (PT) did not shake the foundations of the dominant hegemony, but they did frighten the bourgeoisie; this was enough for the bourgeoisie to launch a coup d'état in 2016 to remove Dilma Rousseff, who had been legitimately re-elected in 2014, from the presidency. Subsequently, and as yet another reflection of the fragility of its hegemony, the bourgeoisie did not hesitate to support a candidate who was known to be deranged when faced with the possibility of another victory of a PT candidate.

In recompense for the massive support he received from the bourgeoisie, the unnameable winner (Jair Bolsonaro), tried to implement an ultra-neoliberal political-economic plan and to use his presidential mandate to form a government that flirts with fascism, in the eyes of some, or that has Bonapartist characteristics, in the eyes of others. And so, among progressive sectors, there is the almost unanimous understanding that we will have a long journey to defeat the *Bolsonarismo* that has flourished in Brazilian society, even if Bolsonaro himself is defeated in the October 2022 elections.

In his book *What Is Revolution?*, the Marxist sociologist Florestan Fernandes asked what the role of the working class is in defensive periods and when the proletariat lacks its own means of organisation and class autonomy. He replied to his own question by saying that this is the time for the working class to advance struggles for structural reforms, for a revolution within the current order. He emphasised that the working class's political involvement in advancing the revolution within the current order produces strategically important socialising consequences.

Through its struggle for popular agrarian reform – one of the structural reforms that the dominant class within urban-industrial society never carried out – the MST seeks to raise the level of organisation and politicisation of its social base in support of a politically emancipatory, socialist project. On another front, the MST is a protagonist in the construction of the Popular Project for Brazil (*Projeto Brasil Popular*). This project aims to consolidate a historic bloc that promotes anti-capitalist, emancipatory struggles and immediate economic gains that meet the needs and interests of the working class. It is organised around seven paradigms:

1. Ensuring a good life for all;
2. Defending nature as a common good;
3. Engaging in the permanent construction of social equality;
4. Valuing and respecting social and cultural diversity;

5. Defending democracy and popular participation in the management of the state;
6. Protecting sovereignty and people's development; and
7. Practicing humanist values.

We hope that both the political project for popular agrarian reform and the Popular Project for Brazil help us to incorporate more social and popular actors that take up positions to contest the capitalist system, that revive an ethical-political-cultural approach that allows for the integration of all emancipatory demands, and that promote the social and political articulation of subaltern subjects as the protagonists of emancipatory anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist alternatives. We hope that the consolidation of this historic bloc around these two projects allows us to advance in the process of achieving working-class hegemony.





Photograph by Mídia Ninja

Acknowledgments:

This interview would not be the same if it had not been for the significant and solidaristic contribution of Professor Cristina Bezerra of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in Minas Gerais, Brazil.





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