



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 10, Issue, 06, pp. 37143-37145, June, 2020

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.19035.06.2020>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

THE FIRST LAND OCCUPATIONS PRACTICED BY THE LANDLESS RURAL WORKERS MOVEMENT (MST) IN RIO GRANDE DO NORTE, BRAZIL

***Baltazar Macaíba de Sousa**

PhD in Sociology, Associate Professor. Department of Social Sciences, Center for Applied Sciences and Education, Federal University of Paraiba

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 14th March, 2020

Received in revised form

08th April, 2020

Accepted 16th May, 2020

Published online 30th June, 2020

Key Words:

Peasants. Landless. Latifundium.
Agriculture. MST.

**Corresponding author: Baltazar Macaíba de Sousa,*

ABSTRACT

The study is the result of research carried out on the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), focusing on the first occupations carried out by the MST in Rio Grande do Norte (RN) in Vale do Açu. The arrival of militants from the Movement of the Landless to RN in 1989, and the initial relationship established between them and the PT militants of the city of Açu, will enable those to start organizing it in the state. Even in that city, the MST will install a Secretariat that made it possible to expand its contacts with leaders of the MSTR (Rural Workers Union Movement) and leaders of the Rural unions in the municipalities of Açu, Ipanguaçu, Carnaubais, Jucurutu, São Rafael, Santana of Matos. However, the consolidation process of the aforementioned Movement is taking shape based on several situations: conquests of the settlement areas, its action within the union movement, its constitution as a political reference of a part of the peasantry, in addition to its role in shock and negotiation with the State, that is, in the game of class struggle.

Copyright © 2020, Baltazar Macaíba de Sousa. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Baltazar Macaíba de Sousa. 2020. "The first land occupations practiced by the landless rural workers movement (mst) in rio grande do norte, Brazil", *International Journal of Development Research*, 10, (06), 37143-37145.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Landless Rural Workers Movement, in Rio Grande do Norte (RN), begins in the second semester of 1989, when the first MST militants, Neide and Vilanir arrive in the city of Açu. The first from Paraíba State and the second from Ceará State. They look for the Workers' Party (PT) of the city, identify themselves as militants of the Landless Movement, saying that they came to do a survey on the Municipality and get in touch with the rural population. In fact, an informal meeting took place with the leadership of the PT. Even so, the leaders of the Workers' Party of the said municipality, cautiously, contacted the national leadership of the MST and confirmed whether it was really some of its militants. From then on, a closer relationship was established between MST activists and some members of the PT. The main sources and techniques used in the research were as follows: a bibliographic search was made on the agrarian issue related, more specifically, to the Landless Movement, and the collection of documents - books, training books, bulletins, pamphlets, newspapers, minutes of meetings, reports, sources from INCRA, SAR, ITERN, SEAPAC -; also, interviews and conversations were carried out with union leaders, activists

and leaders of the workers' / popular movement that accompanied the beginning of the MST in RN, in which oral tradition filled the gap in written documents, another essential resource was the possibility of direct contact in the areas of settlements and camps, which allowed the observation of the facts in locus.

The first occupations

The first land occupation in RN, organized and directed by the Landless Rural Workers Movement, took place in the second half of January 1990, in the municipality of Augusto Severo, at Fazenda Bom Futuro, with the participation of one hundred and seventy families. Most of these families came from rural communities, in which there was already a previous work developed by pastoral sectors linked to the Catholic Church, according to the following statement:

"I had the opportunity to speak with several religious leaders and they said that the MST was holding meetings in the communities worked by the Church" (TESTIMONY of a Catholic militant).

The work of the Church in the region was mainly carried out by the SAR - since 1984 - which provided support and assistance to families that were expropriated from their lands due to the construction of the Armando Ribeiro Gonçalves reservoir (Gomes da Silva, 1992). For the MST to organize its first land occupation in RN, at that time, several meetings were held in the following municipalities: Açu, Ipanguaçu, São Rafael, Carnaubais and Jucurutu with peasants and agricultural wage workers. At these meetings, the militants identified themselves as belonging to the Landless Rural Workers Movement, explained what the MST was, and also discussed the land problem and the importance of carrying out Agrarian Reform in the Country; already identified land that was in the process of expropriation for the purposes of Agrarian Reform and discussed the need to occupy that government land. Such attitudes by MST militants showed the implementation of their organizational principles of the struggle for land. Which leads us to understand that before any occupation, there must be all the preparatory work that precedes it. Such preparation translates into holding meetings with peasant families who are going to participate in the struggle; form commissions that are responsible for guaranteeing material support, such as food, transportation, tent tents, finance and political support from sectors that fight for Agrarian Reform - leftist parties, progressive sectors of the Catholic Church, rural and urban unions, etc. - dissemination through the media (radio, newspaper, television). This method of organizing the struggle for land is one of the particularities of the MST, which even distinguishes it from other organized forms of struggle by the peasantry. Even applying, in part, the organizational guidelines, the occupation in the municipality of Augusto Severo was a failure. The first attempt to organize land occupation in the State (RN) failed, the MST does not demobilize itself, on the contrary, it is through the work of its militants who seek to reestablish their contacts with the rural communities that participated in the action, in Augusto Severo and, from there, they start planning a new occupation, this time in the municipality of Santana do Matos, resulting in the arrest of Livânia Frizon and Maria das Graças de Sousa, in February 1990.

Latifundium and MST

The displacement of MST activists from other states to RN is part of the expansion policy of the Landless Movement, in the political struggle for Agrarian Reform, enabling its genesis in the State. This fact cannot be seen in a particular way and in an isolated way. In this sense, the MST's action can only be explained if one takes into account, for example, the testimony of Livânia Frizon, one of the MST's activists:

"As long as there is this problem of hunger and landowning, the movement will exist as a mass organization that will organize and mobilize these workers and that does not have a vision only for the landless. It has a vision there for the homeless and other categories. Agrarian reform it will not happen from today to tomorrow, nor without radical changes in society. Our struggle is not only for land occupation, it is broader" (Revista RN / Econômico, September / 1992).

This position by Livânia Frizon is a pure reflection of reality, when referring to the latifundium, as one of the characteristic features of the RN, which has as one of its marks, the existence of a land structure based on the latifundium, on the one hand -

whose function is serve as a basis for the political power of traditional agrarian oligarchies - and, on the other hand, a significant number of small peasant properties, whose population lives in a state of absolute misery. According to the hunger map in Rio Grande do Norte, the state has an indigence rate of 45% of the population and in rural areas there are 110,970 hungry families who are hungry, that is, more than half a million people in the countryside alone who has something to eat. The data that follows are revealing, regarding the predominance of landowning property and show irreversible contradictions, because while 34,923 small properties, with less than 10 hectares, occupy an area of 116,747 ha; at the other extreme, 535 latifundium, over 1000, occupy an area of 1,032,716 ha, according to the Statistical Yearbook of IDEC / 1993. (Anuario estatístico, 1991, 1992, 1993). As the latifundium constitutes one of the pillars, in the accumulation process, of the modern capitalist structure, the land in RN, equally to the other States of Brazil, is as or more concentrated than the other means of production (industries, plants, factories). It is no coincidence that 7% of the properties (the latifundium) occupy 64% of the land in RN (Estrutura, 1986) This reality is dominated by traditional agrarian oligarchies that persist thanks to the new identity with the latifundium and the political control that it maintains over small peasants. This is why the class struggle in the countryside, in Rio Grande do Norte, is evident between poor peasants, on the one hand, and the agrarian oligarchies, on the other. Thus, it must be considered that land conflicts are directly related to the process of concentration of property in very few hands, in which the latifundium, in Brazil and in RN, is configured as a political advantage and not only as a delay (Moura, 1989).

This is the basis on which the class struggle in the countryside is built. This fact, which is intertwined with the social instability experienced by the peasantry, due to a small production which allows him a precarious survival, so he is forced to wage seasonally due to the conditions dictated by the laws that govern capitalist society. Thus, the social reality of the peasantry, his contact with other social classes, his spontaneous struggle, his life characterized by uncertainty and fear of misery, in addition to the strong repression imposed by the landowners, make him rebel against such a state of affairs. and intolerances. It is a level of social oppression experienced by the peasants and which is maintained in a similar way to what happened during the period of the republic of the colonels. The formation of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers in the State of Rio Grande do Norte does not occur equally as it was in the States (RS, SC, PR) of the South region, in which the struggle of families affected by the construction of dams for hydroelectric plants was combined, the struggle of squatters and small tenants who were expelled from indigenous reserves and the Landless Peasants Movement in Western Paraná, which originated from poor peasant families that were expropriated by capital and dates back to the early 1970 (Martins, 1992, 1999). While in the region South, are different experiences of peasant movements that intertwine and give rise to the Movement of the Landless; in Rio Grande do Norte, the MST begins its organization process based on the action of its militants from other states - PB, CE - who travel to the northern province of Rio Grande do Sul, more specifically, to the region of Vale do Açu and area of influence of the Baixo-Açu Project (Vargas, 1987), in order to organize it in a totally different framework, both from the perspective of the political and economic conjuncture of

Brazilian society, as well as the organizational development of the Landless Movement itself. As for the organizational aspect of the MST, in 1989, it functioned like the Leninist party, with organizations that plot their actions to intervene on the fronts of battles (Vencelao, 1990). Organized at national level, in more than 17 states of the Federation (Movimento, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995), it had a good financial structure, whose sources are from national and international institutions (governmental and non-governmental). Their actions were centralized from a collegial direction, in which many of their activists came from the Catholic Church, mainly from the base ecclesial communities, pastoral and Church services. As for the professionalization of militants, this was already part of their organizational policy. Their activism received a certain degree of training - lessons on political, economic and social processes - in which they study aspects of capitalist society linked to production, cooperatives, agronomy and politics. There is a common point in the formation of the Landless States of the Southern region and in Rio Grande do Norte, the fact that both realities are under the logic of capital. Since the particularity of the RN is the characterization of an agriculture, in which agricultural poles are combined, extremely developed, such as that of fruit growing - responsible for the export of tropical fruits, such as melon, mango, acerola, watermelon to the European market - and the sugar cane and subsistence agriculture (predominant in relation to modernized agriculture) marked by traditional production methods (Wanderley, 1991). In particular, agriculture is the driving force of RN's economy, with subsistence exploitation predominating throughout the State, whose main products are: beans, corn, cassava and cotton.

Conclusion

It was found that the RN has as one of its marks, the existence of a land structure based on the latifundium, on the one hand - whose function is to serve as a basis for the political power of traditional agrarian oligarchies - and, on the other hand, a number significant number of small peasant properties, whose population lives in a state of absolute misery, according to the Hunger Map in Rio Grande do Norte. In fact, the state has an indigence rate of 45% of the population and in rural areas there are 110,970 hungry families who are hungry, that is, more than half a million people in the countryside have enough to eat. It can be concluded that the displacement of MST militants from other states to RN was part of the expansion policy of the Landless Movement, in the political struggle for agrarian reform, enabling its genesis in the state. This fact cannot be seen in a particular way and in an isolated way, since the NB has one of the characteristic features of the latifundium. The study allowed the understanding of some factors responsible for the emergence of the Landless Movement in RN, due to the current agrarian-peasant problem that involves thousands of poor peasants in the struggle for access to land.

REFERENCES

- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1989). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 19.
- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1995). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 24.
- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1990). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 20.
- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 21.
- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1992). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 22.
- Anuario estatístico do Rio Grande do Norte (1993). Natal: Fund. IDEC, V. 23.
- Estrutura Fundiária do Rio Grande do Norte (1986). Natal Fund.
- Gomes da Silva, Aldenor (1992). O Domínio do Processo de Trabalho na agricultura Irrigada do Nordeste a Persistência da Parceria. Campinas UNICAMP, TESE. IDEC, maio.
- Informativo Municipal: Bento Fernandes (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC.
- Informativo Municipal: João Câmara (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC.
- Informativo Municipal: Parazinho. Natal: Fund. IDEC, 1991.
- Informativo Municipal: Pedra Grande (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC.
- Informativo Municipal: Poço Branco (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC.
- Informativo Municipal: Taipu (1991). Natal: Fund. IDEC
- Martins, José de Souza (1999). Os Camponeses e a Política no Brasil. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Martins, José de Souza et al (1992). Sonhos e desejos dos lavradores desafios para a CPT São Paulo: Edições Loyola.
- Moura, Maria da Conceição de Almeida (1989). Agricultura de Subsistência no Rio Grande do Norte: produção e reprodução da força de trabalho. Natal: UFRN, Tese. seca: a concentração fundiária no Baixo-Açu. In: A Problemática da Seca no RN Natal: UFRN (Col. Sala de Aula, 21).
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1989). Normais Gerais do MST São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1990). Agenda MST - 90. São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1991). Agenda MST - 91 São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1992). Agenda MST - 92. São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1993). Agenda MST - 93. São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1994). Agenda MST - 94. São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra (1995). Agenda MST -95. São Paulo: MST.
- Movimento dos Sem Terra. Construindo o Caminho. São Paulo: MST, 1986.
- Vargas, Nazira Abib Oliveira (1987). Beiradeiros do Baixo-Açu. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE / Instituto Nacional do Folclore.
- Vencelao, Paulo Tarso (1990). Os Sem Terra. In: Revista Teoria e Debate, N° 9. São Paulo.
- Wanderley, M. N B (1991). O camponês: um trabalhador para o capital. Brasília: Caderno de Difusão de Tecnologia.