

Public Representations of the Collective Memory of Brazil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra

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A textual analysis of editorials in the *Revista Sem Terra*, an official publication of the Brazilian Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers' Movement—MST), shows that the movement leadership uses collective memory making—retellings of past violence and repression—to emphasize the harsh consequences of neoliberal economic policy and appeal to the emotions of activists and allies. These retellings help the movement to further the cause of resistance to neoliberalism and build a national coalition that can promote economic alternatives and social equity.

Keywords: Collective memory making, MST, *Revista Sem Terra*, Brazil, Social movements

The Brazilian Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers' Movement—MST) originated in the struggles of rural farmers in the late 1970s advocating for land reform under Brazil's military dictatorship. The movement was formally organized in 1984. Working with landless laborers to identify and occupy underutilized land and attempt to build just and equitable communities on that land as a means of aggressively advocating its redistribution, the MST is the oldest peasant movement in Brazil and has become the largest grassroots popular organization in Latin America.

As it has developed, the MST has taken on an increasingly broad political agenda and has become a prominent force in Brazil's political left. Through its continued growth (via further land seizures) and its educational endeavors, the MST has come to see itself as a powerful force capable of overhauling Brazilian society, throwing off the corruption and inequality of the past and promoting social change that equalizes the social and economic status of Brazil's rich and poor (Carvalho, 2010). To this end it has created several periodical publications to articulate its vision of its past, present, and future.

One fruitful source for analyzing the MST's self-image is the *Revista Sem Terra* (Landless Magazine), which presents feature articles reporting on national and international issues, interviews with prominent intellectuals, cultural/political/economic commentaries, and film and book reviews. Given the often negative portrayal of the MST by the conventional Brazilian and international media, the *Revista Sem Terra* was established to counter these narratives and provide an MST perspective to outsiders sympathetic to the movement (Ayala, 2011; Menezes, 2011).¹ According to editor-in-chief Beatriz Pasqualino, the editors and staff of the journal are professional journalists recruited on the basis of their professional credentials and their sympathy with the movement (Ayala, 2011). All articles are written by members of the staff and reviewed by members of the MST national leadership to ensure compatibility with its general message.

Of particular interest here is the short introductory editorial that begins each issue, typically responding to recent events from an MST perspective or retelling stories of violence and repression from the MST's memory of its history. These editorials are always written by members of the MST's national leadership (Ayala, 2011) and are

sometimes signed by all of them (Menezes, 2011). As a result, they document the leadership's efforts to shape collective memory as they respond to and interpret current events as representatives of the movement as a whole. In other words, each issue's editorial works to present the collective position of the leadership of the movement, and over time the corpus of *Revista Sem Terra* issues has come to represent an institutional history of the leadership's understanding of national and world events from the movement's beginnings.

This article will critically examine the discourse used in these editorials from 2004 to 2010, focusing on what they tell us about the political, social, and cultural worldview of the MST's national leadership, which sees the magazine as a means of memory making, identity formation, and national-level coalition building (June 2009). Through an analysis of these editorials I here address **issues** of violence during Brazil's nondemocratic times by engaging with the manner in which MST leadership has institutionalized the memory of such violence as a means of mobilizing activists and allies.

The *Revista Sem Terra* is characterized by a strong critique of physical and economic violence—both the physical violence that has been inflicted on the MST by the government during the military dictatorship and since and the violent economic effects of spreading global neoliberalism. Within this framework, the MST positions itself as a radical social movement with the power to counter these trends. The editorial board is purposeful in its recounting and exploration of the movement's institutional history. By pointing to the MST's resistance to violence and repression during Brazil's military

regime, the leadership is consciously attempting to motivate and mobilize its activists to continue the movement's institutional struggle for land rights and social equity.

This article contributes to the current literature on collective memory making by documenting an interesting amalgamation of previously documented forms of collective memory. Aksu (2009) has previously divided collective memory broadly as organizational (fostered by organizations like the MST, primarily for solidarity-building purposes) and societal or institutional (including the collective memory shared by citizens of a nation-state or residents of a particular city or region). The collective memory being appropriated and refashioned by the MST leadership in the *Revista Sem Terra* is both organizational and societal, as it uses the movement's organizational history of violent repression during Brazil's totalitarian past to recruit allies from throughout Brazilian society who have similar memories of that past. Through the recruitment of such allies, the leadership can attempt to build a broader coalition capable of changing the national Brazilian conversation on economic development. To make this argument I will first situate the *Revista Sem Terra* within the current literature on collective memory making and explain my methodology and then review the findings of my study of the magazine's editorials from 2004 to 2010.

Theoretical Framework

The wave of dictatorship that swept through South America in the 1970s and 1980s brought extensive suppression of dissident voices. As the region transitioned to political democracy in the late 1980s and 1990s, many social movements and

organizations representing marginalized or repressed voices engaged in collective memory making as a means of mobilizing activists and outside support for their cause. Former political prisoners and victims of authoritarian violence in Uruguay and Argentina have used collective memory making to pursue catharsis with regard to their traumatic experiences (Fried, 2006). In Mexico the Zapatista movement has actively appropriated and reinterpreted the history surrounding Emiliano Zapata and his role in the Mexican revolution to support its current goals (Benjamin, 2000).

The MST leadership has likewise undergone processes of collective memory making, using a rhetoric of violence to describe both the physical atrocities committed against the MST by the Brazilian state and the economic hardships undergone by the Brazilian poor as a result of neoliberalism. Just as the Zapatistas have appropriated the story of Zapata to support their current positions, the MST uses its institutional history of violent repression to frame its current arguments against economic neoliberalism in a rhetoric that gives its cause both a sense of history and an increased feeling of urgency.

Collective memory making is a group's effort to endow past events with meaning that informs its identity and motivation in the present. Olick (1999) makes clear that the present is always influenced by the interpretations and meanings that social beings, whether individual or collectively, give to past events. Nerone (1989) argues that when authoritarian regimes limit the ways in which the past can be publicly interpreted, marginalized groups engage in collective memory making as a means of resistance to their reality of social repression. The collective memory making that I describe here is organizationally based in Aksu's (2009) terms but intended to influence the collective memory of Brazilian society as a whole through the outreach of the *Revista Sem Terra* in

social circles sympathetic to the movement. In this sense, this article expands the literature on collective memory making by bridging previously distinct categories of analysis (that is, organizational and societal).

This analysis of the MST's collective memory making can help scholars of Latin America to understand broader processes of collective memory making in democratic Brazil. The collective memory of a particular society is in large part shaped by the popular media (Humanes, 2003), which in Brazil typically portray the MST and similar militant movements in a negative light (Menezes, 2011). Previous scholarship on the rewriting of collective memory has shown that its significance resides in part in the dialogue between marginalized and hegemonic voices in a particular society and these groups' different interpretations of history (Gur-Ze'ev and Pappé, 2003). Building upon this idea, I argue that the tension between popular representations of the MST and its history (Ayala, 2011; Menezes, 2011) and its efforts at collective memory making in the editorials of the *Revista Sem Terra* only adds to the richness and significance of these writings, providing insight into the dynamics of relations between dominant and marginalized voices in the Brazilian media.

The *Revista Sem Terra* uses collective memory making by recalling repressive experiences under military rule to build a broad coalition with the ultimate aim of achieving justice. Through the use of the mass media to this end, the national MST leadership positions itself as a group of cultural producers (Bourdieu, 1993) that, through its media output, influences the beliefs and dispositions of activists and allies and mobilizes them to continue the fight for agrarian and social reform.

The Movimento Sem Terra

Prominent Brazilian scholars representing the new left have documented the history of the various leftist social movements that were the ideological and political forerunners of the MST. Maria da Glória Gohn (1997) has argued that an active and defiant Brazilian civil society has existed since the colonial period. Ruth Cardoso (1994) and Eder Sader (1991) have examined other leftist social movements, led by workers, women, and other marginalized groups, within the same late-twentieth-century time period in which the MST arose, noting that the mobilization of collective memory legitimized their efforts to lead Brazilian society toward social reform, though these movements have been hampered by the spread of private and nonprofit organizations that accompanied the rise of neoliberal social policy in the 1980s and 1990s (Paoli and Telles, 2000).

Bernardo Fernandes (2000), building on this Brazilian literature, situates the origins of the MST within the long history of smaller movements for peasant farmer rights in rural Brazil. For Fernandes the MST represents only the most recent (and likely most widespread) manifestation of a long-standing rural Brazilian concern with land reform and social justice.

Brazilian land ownership is highly concentrated, with a very small group of large landowners representing almost half of all rural landholdings (Stédile and Fernandes, 1999). Various peasant groups have struggled for more equitable land distribution for much of the twentieth century: as early as 1940s, the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (Communist Party of Brazil—PCB) organized peasant leagues throughout Brazil's South

and Southeast. While the PCB's interest was explicitly political and the peasant leagues did significantly increase its membership numbers, this shift also brought a critical mass of disenfranchised peasant farmers into the political process (Welch, 1999). The PCB continued to pursue a role as a power broker in rural areas of Brazil by supporting land reform through the União de Lavradores e Trabalhadores Agrícolas do Brasil (Farmers' and Farmworkers' Union of Brazil —ULTAB), founded in the 1950s, and its successor the Confederação Nacional de Trabalhadores na Agricultura (National Confederation of Agricultural Workers —CONTAG), founded in 1963. These organizations worked to organize rural peasant farmers first through efforts to register them to vote, then by the formation of small labor associations, and eventually by the creation of formal labor unions (Welch, 2009).

During the military regime of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, several similar peasant movements arose fighting for agrarian reform, such as the Movimento dos Agricultores Sem Terra (Landless Farmers' Movement—MASTER) and the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Land Commission), a collection of Catholic and Lutheran liberation theologians that worked alongside farm workers to promote justice in land distribution (Welch, 2006). The Comissão Pastoral da Terra used organizing methods similar to those of its communist political counterparts, partly to prevent the PCB from displacing the Church in its social role in rural Brazil (Welch, 2009).

Following in the footsteps of these groups, and with the direct support of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Stédile and Fernandes, 1999), the Movimento Sem Terra arose through land occupations in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state. In response to these occupations, after a lengthy period of

struggle and violent repression the government eventually recognized the occupiers' right to land and resettled them, giving the MST its first taste of political legitimacy (Carter, 2000). Since then, the movement has continued to settle unused private land, spreading organically in a decentralized manner that varies from region to region, according to local contexts and the demands of the local workers that affiliate with it (Wolford, 2003).

There is an extensive literature on the rise of the MST as an organization and an institution (Branford and Rocha, 2002; Medeiros and Leite, 1995; Stédile and Fernandes, 1999). Particularly pertinent to any discussion of institutional memory is the agreement of all of these sources that the MST gained national prominence after a highly publicized confrontation in 1997 in northern Brazil in which 19 MST activists were murdered by the Brazilian military police. The publicity surrounding this event brought the MST a great deal of national sympathy and created pressure for the Brazilian government to make agrarian reform a priority.

Since 2000, the MST has been able to sustain itself in part by gaining access to social programs for its activists (Ondetti, 2008). However, the movement has aims far beyond supporting those already participating in its settlements. It is strongly committed to a wholesale transformation of society, replacing the current unjust capitalist system with one in which all people can live and work in dignity, solidarity, and equality (MST, 1995; 2001). The MST consciously uses revolutionary language, drawing on Marxist theory and particularly the work of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (1970), ultimately seeing itself as an instrument of social revolution. Much of this revolutionary identity is crystallized in the *Revista Sem Terra*, which has effectively documented the

MST's collective memory of several decades of organizing, protesting, and confronting the Brazilian government alongside poor Brazilians.

Methodology

My interpretation of the *Revista Sem Terra* editorials employed the methodology outlined by Clifford Geertz (1973), in which discourse is viewed as cultural representation. Therefore the editorials were treated as texts that, through analysis, reveal the ways in which MST leaders' interpretation of their environment simultaneously reflects and reproduces the movement's organizational culture. In order to focus this study, I will primarily analyze the introductory editorial comments of each issue, which clearly and succinctly represent the opinions of the MST's national leadership on the prominent topical issues raised during the time frame of any given issue.

I first read each piece in the original Portuguese and then translated it into English and had the translation checked by several native Portuguese-speaking colleagues. I read all the editorials I could find either online or through my university library. The limited printing of early issues and the lack of access to the most recent issues outside Brazil were an unavoidable limitation of the study. I coded the editorials following the procedure outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), first reading through them several times and noting potential themes and then rereading them and recording the themes that were most prevalent, which proved to be violence, neoliberalism, and reflections on the MST's future. Because of their prominence throughout the time period studied, I analyzed these three themes topically rather than chronologically.

The citation system used within this article is to follow each quotation with a parenthetical comment giving the time period covered by the *Revista Sem Terra* issue being cited. The *Revista Sem Terra* comes out every two months (with several hiatuses caused by the magazine's budget constraints), and thus a given citation may look like this: (May/June 2008).

Findings

The MST leaders writing the editorials for the *Revista Sem Terra* use movement philosophy as a lens for viewing the world, purposefully building upon the movement's institutional memory of democratic struggle to articulate a distinctly MST perspective. According to their statement of purpose (June 2009), the aim of the *Revista Sem Terra* is to

fulfill an important role in the democratization of communication, by presenting voices that aren't normally heard in "conventional" publications and publishing news and themes from a different perspective from the singular line of thought imposed by the publications owned by large businesses. . . . These publications also bring to light information about subjects that are omitted by the press, such as the successes of organized labor and land reform organizations.

By calling attention to the mass media's biases and subjectivity, MST leaders highlight the need for their own personal, openly political voice. For example, these editorials

directly label those that hamper the MST's efforts "the bourgeois state" or "the bourgeois media" (Oct 2010) and "the right" (Feb/Mar 2010).

As a result of this framing, reading through the initial editorials of the *Revista Sem Terra* provides a fascinating framing of a given historical period, as each issue's editorial addresses current global and national events as perceived by the leaders of the MST: for example, the Lula administration (which turned from the political left toward the center), the anniversary of Pinochet's death, a visit from U.S. President George W. Bush, elections throughout Latin America (including those of leftists like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and the Kirchners in Argentina), and the global financial crisis of 2008. In each of these cases the writers reveal a great deal about the way the MST uses contemporary events and issues as a frame from which it can distinguish itself. Editorials also report on MST demonstrations or anniversaries of prominent events in the movement during Brazil's nondemocratic past (Sept/Oct 2006; Nov/Dec 2007; Aug/Sept 2008; Sept/Oct 2009) and evaluate and reevaluate the movement's progress toward its goals (Jul/Aug 2004; May/Jun 2005; Jul/Aug 2005; Jul/Aug 2007; Apr/May 2008; Jan/Feb 2009; Oct 2010). In what follows I will examine the editorials that memorialize institutional experiences with violence, critique neoliberalism, and express the leadership's strong belief in a prominent role for the MST in future social change.

Violence

A number of editorials were dedicated exclusively to remembrance and recognition of acts of violence committed against the landless both during the

period of military dictatorship (Nov/Dec 2007; Aug/Sept 2008) and more recently (Sept/Oct 2006; Nov/Dec 2007; Aug/Sept 2008; Sept/Oct 2009). One editorial refers to instances in which MST activists were violently removed from encampments, dating back to the beginning of the movement during the military dictatorship. The MST leadership's analysis of this history of violence is short and to the point (Nov/Dec 2007): “Violence against workers is not a new phenomenon. Since the arrival of the European colonists, the history of our country has been marked by the criminalization of poor communities as well as continual violence. This violence is structural and is an essential mechanism for the continued exploitation of the Brazilian population and ownership of our natural resources.”

From the perspective put forward in this editorial, the violence documented in MST history is not arbitrary or isolated; rather, it is an instrument used by powerful elements of Brazilian society to maintain their power: “This is not a new wave of violence. We are victims of growing structural violence, a violence that has been naturalized in our daily lives” (Sept/Oct 2006). While in the early years of the MST the power structure behind this structural violence was the military dictatorship (Nov/Dec 2007), several other entities and groups are documented as using violence similarly to maintain their power: local and national political leaders (Aug/Sept 2008), local and regional representatives of the judiciary (Nov/Dec 2007; Aug/Sept 2008), the military police (Sept/Oct 2006), and landowners and representatives of agribusiness (Nov/Dec 2007; Sept/Oct 2009; Feb/Mar 2010). Several editorials refer to specific incidents of

violence such as the murder of MST activists by local business-organized militias in Rio Grande do Sul (Sept/Oct 2009) and Paraná (Nov/Dec 2007).

The MST leaders explicitly tie this violence not only to the powerful elements of society that sanction it but to the economic interests those powerful elements represent: “The most dynamic sectors of capitalist accumulation . . . are also the largest promoters of violence against the working class and social movements” (Feb/Mar 2010). The leaders also condemn the government entities, especially the judiciary, that facilitate or allow this violence (Aug/Sept 2008): “The wave of violence and criminality that social movements face today is supported by the Judiciary and the political apparatus, which function as executing instruments of these acts. This sponsored violence can’t be separated from the power and interests of agribusiness and the transnational corporations that work in rural Brazil.”

Neoliberalism

In addition to these editorials on violence inflicted by business and corporate interests that represent the spread of neoliberalism, the editorial writers also write about neoliberalism writ large, always in negative terms and often using violent imagery. While they do not explicitly define “neoliberalism,” they use a working definition of it as an ideology that prioritizes the opening up of developing markets to outside investment, the privatization of social services, and the replacement of state industries with private alternatives. In general, the writers associate neoliberalism with trust in capitalism and the free market, distrust of state intervention in the economy, and with the period of military dictatorship in which this ideology was first embraced, both in Brazil and

throughout Latin America. For example, one of the editorials that criticize neoliberalism most strongly was written in response to the death of Augusto Pinochet in late 2005. It begins by discussing the violent repression that characterized Pinochet's government along with other contemporary military dictatorships throughout Latin America. It follows by connecting this violent history with the neoliberal economic policies that were embraced during that period (Jan/Feb 2007):

In the early 1980s, neoliberal ideas became predominant in the Western capitalist world. . . . In Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, all the military governments submitted themselves to neoliberal dictates, leading in a short time to environmental depredation and a bloodletting of income, riches and natural resources that was without precedent on our continent. . . . The speed and gluttony with which international capital took control of our riches was only possible because it could count on the weak submission of our Latin American governments, beginning during the bloody years of military dictatorship but continuing long after, even to the present day.

A theme of violence is continued here with the use of words like “bloodletting” and the association of this ideology with the “bloody years of military dictatorship.” The leaders do not mince words in their rejection of neoliberalism, which they describe as a “disaster” and a “disgrace” (Jul/Aug 2004). In a 2009 editorial they write (Mar/Apr 2009),

In the past 30 years, the ideologues of neoliberalism have sold the belief that the laws of the market, completely separate from any and all ties to the state, are enough to organize national economies. This political concept has been applied to the entire planet in the age of globalization. There have been three decades of this deification of the free market! Values like liberty and democracy, as framed by neoliberalism, have served to justify rampant encouragement of individualism, consumerism, and the incessant search for profit at any cost. The defense of national interests and social investments has become synonymous with delay and the hindrance of national economic development.

This passage makes clear several of the primary disagreements of the MST leaders with neoliberalism: for these writers, the push for privatization that has accompanied neoliberalism since its introduction reduces the sentiments and social policies that tie Brazilians together as a people, replacing concern for the common good with concern for the bottom line.

The disgust felt by the MST for neoliberal economic policy is in part a reflection of the movement's more sweeping rejection of capitalism as an economic system: "Capitalism is incapable of guaranteeing access to material goods for an entire population, or of assuring rational use of natural resources, or of promoting development that doesn't deepen social inequalities, increase poverty and worsen violence" (May/June 2009). In sum, the MST disagrees with neoliberal policies because they intensify capitalism's concern with individual well-being at the expense of the community.

The *Revista Sem Terra* often discusses neoliberalism in concrete terms, depicting the way it plays out in contemporary Latin American politics and regional history. Several years after the election of leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the *Revista Sem Terra* expressed disappointment at his maintenance of the neoliberal status quo (Nov/Dec 2004):

The Lula administration is almost two years in, and it hasn't yet taken off. . . . His extension of social welfare programs has been nothing more than an obligatory appeasement, part of the neoliberal model. Nothing has been changed structurally, and no effective methods have been used to take back economic and social development—especially for the 10 million Brazilian citizens whom Lula promised jobs in 2002.

The *Revista Sem Terra* also has strong words for other Latin American elected officials who failed to live up to the populist ideals they espoused in their elections. As in previous citations, the word choice here (“oppress,” “exploit”) continues to connect neoliberalism with previous discussions of violence (Sept/Oct 2004):

The electoral results of the past few years in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador created at first glance the false idea that neoliberal politics had been effectively weakened and would be replaced by an apparent restart of national development projects based on social inclusion and the

satisfaction of basic human needs. . . . In all of these countries, the demand for a change of direction is getting stronger and stronger. The impoverishment of our continent has reached unacceptable extremes. The concentration of wealth and social exclusion in our region has reached levels of inequality that we've never had to live with before. The dilemma of these governments is to fulfill their promises to their people, putting their power behind the people rather than behind their adversaries, who only oppress and exploit and want to keep doing so.

In more recent periods in which economic crises affected Brazil, the editorial writers have been quick to point to the role of neoliberalism in creating these crises. Several years after the global crisis of 2008, the only positive element of that crisis for *Revista Sem Terra's* writers was that neoliberalism might finally have met its match (Mar/Apr 2009):

Now, the planetary gravity of the current capitalist economic crisis is destroying all of the myths of the free market. This crisis has turned the papers that fed financial speculation to dust. But it has also turned to dust the rhetoric of State non-intervention and self-regulation in the market. The myth that the market resolves everything has fallen. Those who argued that the state should not intrude in the economy today are before governments imploring for financial help from public coffers. . . . Public money, once again used to save failed capitalists. Neoliberalism is totally

demoralized. The bourgeoisie, the owners of this project, feel lost and don't have alternatives to present. It is thus necessary to fight, first so that the crisis affects the working class as little as possible. . . . This crisis shows . . . the necessity for the working class to present a socialist alternative to our country's people.

While neoliberalism has hardly faded in the past several years as MST leaders might have hoped, the persistence and prominence of such policies gives those leaders an enemy to pursue and use to rally militants to its collectivist cause (Jul/Aug 2004):

The left and the social movements need urgently to find alternatives that contribute to unifying the poor, the workers, the socially marginalized, and all those who believe in the construction of another more just and egalitarian Brazil, one that is politically and economically independent and sovereign, that recognizes at its core the value and dignity of every human being, of every Brazilian.

As *Revista Sem Terra* makes very clear, until neoliberal policies cease in Brazil, the MST's institutional memory of the violent effects of such policies since its beginnings requires that they continue to fight against them.

The Future of the MST

While consistently identifying inequality as it manifests itself in Brazilian society, the *Revista Sem Terra* spends nearly as much space discussing the achievements of the MST in challenging neoliberalism and violence, promoting the retention of these events in the movement's collective memory (Jul/Aug 2007):

In its historical trajectory, the MST has achieved some important successes. It has grown in organization, now organized in 24 of 27 Brazilian states. It has built its own identity, with organizing principles, advocacy methods and political, economic and social propositions for the improvement of rural life. . . . It has brought together social forces to defend the necessity we have of a political project for Brazil that will ensure us social justice and autonomous sovereignty in the face of imperialist nations. . . . It becomes more evident over time that our country will not reach a proper stage of development if it continues submissive to the interests of rich countries and doesn't promote a richer and wider distribution of the wealth we produce. This will happen only when our people demand it. That is our challenge.

The leaders see their organization as having occupied a truly revolutionary role, pushing Brazilian society for decades to rise up and demand an alternative to neoliberal economics and to subservience to the Global North. Much of the discourse in the *Revista Sem Terra* seems meant primarily for mobilization, treating change as inevitable if MST activists and their urban allies commit fully to its realization.

MST leaders see their influence going well beyond agrarian reform (May/Jun 2005): "The landless march not only for agrarian reform and money to support our

encampments but also to call for the means that could provide social development, job creation, equal distribution of wealth, better living and working conditions, the deepening of our democracy, and the defense of our national sovereignty.” In a larger sense, they see themselves as a catalyst for widespread social change, calling on all social movements and members of the left to work toward change that encompasses all of the various specific manifestations of hegemony (Jul/Aug 2005):

The social movements and the left need to construct an alternative way to fight; we need to organize and mobilize ourselves and articulate the specific grievances of different kinds of workers and the general grievances we have toward society as a whole; we need to strengthen the alliances we have to form a new project based on national development, breaking with the current economic model and with the neoliberal politics imposed on us by international financial capital.

Here the leaders effectively present their road map for the future: building coalitions with like-minded groups to support a new economic development model that can contest neoliberalism at the national level. They attempt to build such coalitions by revisiting the repressive moments in their institutional past, highlighting the indignities suffered under the military dictatorship (e.g., Nov/Dec 2007) in an effort to ignite activists' and allies' passion for justice. By calling attention to more recent acts of repression or violence such as the aforementioned repression by military police (Sept/Oct 2006) and the militia-led murders of MST activists in Rio Grande do Sul (Sept/Oct 2009) and Paraná (Nov/Dec

2007), the leadership provides MST activists and allies with a viable target for that emotion.

Conclusion

Revista Sem Terra is one of the primary media spaces in which the MST preserves its institutional memory, and the leadership uses editorials in the magazine to articulate the movement's identity and to engage in collective counterhegemonic memory making for the purpose of political mobilization. The editorials present a powerful critique of the economic constraints of neoliberal economic policy (Jul/Aug 2004, Jan/Feb 2007, Mar/Apr 2009) and review the MST's history of oppression by the Brazilian government (Sept/Oct 2006, Nov/Dec 2007, Sept/Oct 2009, Feb/Mar 2010) under both democratic and authoritarian regimes. By complementing retellings of historical struggles with utopian rhetoric, the MST leadership hopes to build understanding and address current problems of violence against the movement by promoting hope and solidarity among its allies. Their calling attention to the MST's collective memory of violent repression and democratic struggle is intended to remind activists and allies of the need for an alternative to the continuing violence of neoliberalism.

Because the writers of these editorials are dominant figures in the MST, their discourse reflects the theoretical ideals that MST leaders hope to interject into the larger Brazilian political conversation. Their writings are an attempt to spread the institutional memory of the MST among friendly outsiders, expanding its efforts to build a national

collectivist, utopian movement. They constitute an important and previously undocumented attempt at collective memory making, one that is organizationally based and yet nationally oriented, situated firmly in the history of the movement but with the hope of coalition building far beyond the borders of its encampments.

Note

1. While I was unable to find any outlet within the popular media that has directly addressed the claims made in these opening editorials or within the *Revista Sem Terra* more broadly, the editorial board of the magazine feels that its writings balance the generally negative tone of the articles and editorials released in popular news outlets regarding the MST (Ayala, 2011).

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