

# **VIth MST Congress in Brazil and Peoples' Land Reform**

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## Contents

- [Opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress](#)
- [Brazil: The time for the \(...\)](#)

## **Opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress recalls 30 years of MST's history**

VIth MST Congress - 10 to 14 of February, 2014

(February 10) This is a history that is too large to fit in a book, unless this book could be as large as actors who know how to make history. The pages of this book are huge, and were opened in front of 15 thousand people, remembering a remarkable trajectory of social and political struggle in Brazil.

The VI National MST Congress opened officially this Monday morning (Feb 10). The opening *mística*, which is always a highly anticipated moment because of its energy, moved millions of people who filled the Nilson gymnasium in Brasília.

Men, women, youth and children from 23 states and the Federal District and more than 200 international guests, saw the people turn the pages of this important historical process.

The opening *mística* was organized by the MST state coordination of Paraná, a state that represents the historical cradle of the movement. The *mística* involved more than 1500 participants and was divided into five scenes. Each act was announced as one of the huge pages of the book. The book was four meters high and its pages were only turned through a collective effort.

## **Military repression and people's organization**

The performance started with the presentation of the history in the eighties, when the military government, at the time of its death-rattle, still tried to continue to wreak havoc upon the people. Labourers, urban workers, indigenous people and landless peasants, from the city and the countryside, emerged in new organizations. The suppressor state with its military at one side, tried to impose its will. The people were stronger and expelled the armed forces from power.

The rural population returned to organize. In 1984 the MST was born. Painted bodies, now actors of the history, write their own destiny, with the slogan: "occupy, resist and produce", the landless workers break through the fence of *latifundio*, occupying the land. The struggle for Agrarian Reform returns with lot of strength as a political agenda of the country.

MST launched an organization whose form was popular, based on four fundamental pillars: collective leadership, unity, bond with the base (grass-roots) and study-and- work, undeterred and feared by the ruling forces.

## **Struggle and resistance**

Land occupations are political gestures and acts of transformation. The economic powers could not tolerate this and physical resistance burst all over the country. Bursts of gunfire hit hearts, but the people united always stands up: “our nerves are of ice, but our hearts vomit fire. The comrades that died in the blood are immortal in our memory”. How to forget the killings in Carajás, Corumbiara and Felisburgo, or the struggle of the comrades like Roseli Nunes, Dorcelina Folador, Fusquinha, Keno, Cícero, Egídio Brunneto and many others?!

## **Solidarity**

The presence of more than 200 international invited comrades is an indication of the support, prestige and, mainly, the solidarity that MST awakens in many countries and also among other popular organizations in Brazil. Latin-American, African and European flags, as well as flags of peasants from the Via Campesina were present at the opening.

The MST reaffirms its struggle and its internationalist vocation as a fundamental page of its history. “Solidarity is the cement in the building of our movement, established with other populations of Brazil and the world. We need solidarity to confront the transnational capitalists of agribusiness and to struggle for another agricultural model”, affirmed Diego Moreira, member of the national MST leadership, at the saluting at the Congress. The Congress will be held through this Friday (Feb 14). But the Congress started over two years ago, with discussions and reflections, which conducts the main mass movement of Brazil; to guide its forces in favour of popular agrarian reform, the theme of the last act of the *mística*. Popular agrarian reform should return to the people the most precious goods of this planet, which do not belong to individuals, goods such as water, air, healthy land, seeds and forests, to democratize access to land and to radically change this economic model that destroys the land.

The MST sees itself in this way and renews and broadens its commitments in defense of food sovereignty, the production of healthy food, agro-ecology, the preservation of nature, the rights of indigenous people and quilombolas, equality between men and women, and freedom for the youth.

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## **Brazil: The time for the Peoples’ Land Reform**

VI MST National Congress : February 10 to 14, 2014.

(MST from the initials in Portuguese “Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra”)

(Brazilia, January 17, 2014) We arrived to our VI National Congress as the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST). We arrived after more than two years of studies, debates, reunions, assemblies and discussions carried out by our grassroots organizations and representatives from all over Brazil.

We are celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making us the oldest peasant movement in the history of Brazil.

We arrived to these two important events in our history with a well-defined challenge, which is clearly seen in our congress’ motto and in our future work: “Struggle for, work towards a People’s

## Land Reform”

The process, by which we have built our Congress from a grassroots level and through our mobilizations, had made it clear that it is not enough to carry out a traditional Land Reform that only distributes the land. The agribusiness industry has not just taken over productive and unproductive land to produce for export thereby destroying the environment; it has also gained support from governments and within the whole structure of the state in order to fulfill its interests.

Through the implementation of a Peoples’ Land Reform, we aim to secure the people’s right to decide what to produce and what to eat. We struggle for our land so that it is not used to produce ethanol or cellulose. We want that “el campo” (the land destined for agricultural production) becomes a decent place to live, where the youth can live in a worthy manner and everybody enjoys her/his right to education, health, and to develop own industries in order to increase the value of our production.

A Peoples’ Land Reform can only be the outcome of everybody’s struggle, not just the efforts of landless workers. Taking into account that the agribusiness’ model threatens peasant communities, it is necessary to build alliances and mobilize together with those who share our ideas: small-scale farmers, Maroons (former slaves and their descendants), riparian people, agronomy and forestry students as well as anybody willing to build on an alternative model of production.

This Land Reform will also need the support from workers in the urban sector. We need to expose the true nature of the agribusiness industry, which poisons our food, uses the land to produce with the sole goal to export, and promotes slavery and a constant disrespect to environmental and labor laws, among other bad practices.

Our Enemies are powerful and influential. The agribusiness industry has many allies in the media and in our legal system. However, we have learned in our 30-year long history that we need to be fearless and never give up when facing difficulties. That is the reason why we have managed to help providing land for millions of families and feeding hundreds of municipalities nowadays. It is thanks to our struggle and determination as well as the enthusiasm generated by our Congress, that we carry on working towards a Peoples’ Land Reform.

More Information on the Congress:

Where: Brasilia, Brazil.

When: February 10 to 14, 2014.

With: Around 15 000 peasants.

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