

REVOLUTION UNDERWAY: POWER PRACTISES OF MST AND EZLN

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ABSTRACT

REVOLUTION UNDERWAY: POWER PRACTICES OF MST AND EZLN

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This thesis aims to show that MST and EZLN are non-hierarchical, participatory and democratic movements which aim to transform society and national systems without taking power. Their understanding of power is searched in their educational practises. These two movements try to create new alternatives that based on local issues and powers with also awareness of international and global factors. The clues of their understanding of power searched in their history and different resistances struggles.

Keywords: MST, EZLN, social movements, education, globalization

ÖZ

DEVİRİMİN UYGULAMAYA KONMASI: MST VE EZLN'İN İKTİDAR DENEMELERİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu tezin amacı MST ve EZLN'nin iktidarı ele geçirmeden toplumu ve ulusal sistemi dönüştürmeyi hedefleyen hiyerarşik olmayan, katılımcı ve demokratik sosyal hareketler olduğunu göstermektir. İktidar anlayışları eğitim uygulamalarında araştırılmıştır. Bu iki hareket yerel güç ve olaylardan temel alan aynı zamanda uluslararası ve küresel faktörlerin de bilincinde olan alternatifler oluşturmaya çalışmıştır. Bu hareketlerin güç anlayışların ipuçları ve izleri tarihlerinden ve farklı direniş deneyimlerinden yola çıkılarak araştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: MST, EZLN, sosyal hareketler, eğitim, küreselleşme

To the Brave People of Zapatistas and Landless Workers

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This is our simple word which seeks to touch the hearts of humble and simple people like ourselves, but people who are also, like ourselves, dignified and rebel...This is our simple word in order to inform all honest and noble hearts what it is we want in Mexico and the world. This is our simple word, because it is our idea to call on those who are like us and to join together with them, everywhere they are living and struggling...¹

...Another life is possible. Another economic model, another agricultural model... We are struggling for another society...We want another society in which there is life at the priority...²

Within the past few decades, the Latin American left's struggle against neoliberalism and its economic and political hegemony has been receiving increased attention around the world. This is indeed a rather important historical development. When the Communist Bloc, the world's only "real" alternative to capitalism, collapsed, there was an expectation that leftist opposition would fade out in all over the world. Yet as opposed to this expectation and developments in other parts of the world, where leftist parties have lost their power and prestige to NGOs, socialist ideals has continued to find room in Latin America at both political and social levels.

Cuba in Latin America has a particular story of her own. While other examples of real socialism, such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Albania, dissolved or transformed into different types of regimes, Cuba has continued its socialist journey with full dedication notwithstanding a severe US embargo for over forty years now. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc has added a new dimension to the already deteriorating impact of this embargo on Cuba for the country's primary trading partners as well as sources of finance had been the other real socialist countries.

¹ "Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona," <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/especiales/2/>, Accessed 14 May 2008.

² Metin Yeğin, *Topraksızlar* (İstanbul: Versus, 2006), 52.

Latin America is also different from other continents of the world as leftist political parties have been taking control of governments there in recent years. Following the election of Chavez in Venezuela in 1998, leftist parties seized power in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.³ Chavez in Venezuela, Lula in Brazil, Kirchner in Argentina and Morales in Bolivia all ascended to power through their leftist opposition to neoliberalism and capitalism.

Besides leftist political parties, anti-capitalist social movements in Latin American have been getting stronger and waging fierce struggles for their socialist ideals. For instance, after the economic crisis in Argentina, workers occupied the factories in which they had been working, and took control of these enterprises. In Brazil, unjust land distribution has been radically challenged by the land occupations of *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST), the Landless Rural Workers' Movement. In Mexico, *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN), the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, continues to fight for native rights: they negotiate with governments for the recovery of native people's life standards and legal liberties. In Bolivia, there was great public resistance known as the water wars in 2000 and 2004 against the government's attempt to privatize the public water company. Furthermore, great public unrest took place in the country when the US government demanded the cultivation of coca⁴ to be stopped. Thus, Latin America arguably comprises the most powerful alternatives to capitalism in today's world and political climate.

Among all these Latin American social movements and leftist parties, two movements display unique characteristics in their policies and political practices. These movements are the above mentioned EZLN and MST. The MST and EZLN have become crucial in the politics not only of their countries but also of the world due to their strong and effective opposition to their governments' neoliberal politics. While socialism as an economic system seems to lose credibility because of the worldwide prevalence of capitalism, these movements earnestly continue their struggle for a new

³ "Latin Amerika'da Sol Eğilimler," <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/444730.asp>, Accessed 15 May 2008.

⁴ Coca leaf is mostly used to make cocaine, but tea, soups or other goods can also be made from it.

society with viable economic and political alternatives. These movements have been successful in articulating their anti-neoliberal struggle with the liberation theology of Christianity and local political practices as well, an achievement which enabled them to have firm roots in local resistances.

The MST and EZLN have affected their countries' cultures and traditions in a modern and forward-looking way. As Temel Demirer and Sibel Özbudun argue, the EZLN demands have been defined with reference to the native rights and their struggle against neoliberal globalization.⁵ Although the EZLN has based itself on local values, it has also refused to be isolated from the international arena. This is in line with Peadar Kirby's suggestions that some social movements, whose struggles are rooted locally, are often capable of getting articulated with wider national, and even international, struggles.⁶ Hence, Harnecker⁷ shows how the MST first rooted itself among peasants and later went on to influence other sectors of the Brazilian society. The same scholar also argues that the MST still has ways to go, because the movement cannot address all the necessary issues throughout Brazil. While the MST has been very influential in southern Brazil, it still needs to spread itself to other parts of the country.

Two other important academicians who have studied the MST and EZLN, James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, point out that both of these movements carry on mass struggles; that is, they can organize people to take collective action. The MST and EZLN can also take direct action for people's urgent needs in areas, such as health and accommodation. Petras and Veltmeyer relate this achievement to the successful leadership practices of these movements.

The EZLN and MST have based their causes on the people's struggles. In consistency with their emphasis on the centrality of people's problems in leftist struggle, the MST and EZLN have formed non-hierarchical, participatory and democratic movements which aim to transform their societies without taking power. This thesis

⁵ Temel Demirer and Sibel Özbudun, eds., *Mayaların Dönüşü* (İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1998), 9-13.

⁶ Kirby introduces these ideas in the "Introduction to Latin America: Twenty First Century Challenges".

⁷ Harnecker developed those ideas in the book called "Landless Movement-Building a Social Movement".

aims to show how the EZLN and MST have managed to implement these principles in real life by focusing on their practices in the field of education. Hence, their understanding on education as well as educative practices will be analysed in depth with such questions in mind.

It is impossible to assess the success and importance of these movements without understanding first the political atmosphere and the historical context within which they began their struggles. After the 1990s in Latin America, social movements, labor unions, left-wing parties and other oppositional forces of resistance were weak and generally in chaos. The collapse or transformation of real socialism deeply affected them due to the fact that, for Latin America, the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc and other socialist countries had always been very important as both political models and financial supporters. Moreover, the Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia and Albania had inspired leftist movements in terms of the revolutionary models they represented. Many countries in Latin America adopted guerrilla techniques or socialist agendas from these countries: some of the groups took Soviet socialism as their example, while others imitated Albanian socialism or Maoist socialism.

After the real socialist experiences had formally ended in countries like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Romania, or were transformed into new more liberal regimes in countries like China and Vietnam, the supporters of capitalism declared the victory of liberalism and death of socialist and communist ideas. Francis Fukuyama, one of the foremost historians of this century, has even claimed that these events marked the “end of history.” Therefore, after these critical political changes, the need to resist capitalism and liberalism has become a target hard to be defended. As a consequence, there has emerged a consensus in world politics and academia that capitalism is not just the most sensible way, but truly the only possible way, to give shape to societies.⁸

Until the collapse of real socialisms, resistance movements had considered them as important models and alternatives to capitalism. With the collapse of these regimes, people have lost these alternatives and leftist people, groups and movements were left

⁸ Robert Jensen, *An Unsustainable System*, Bala Fria, <http://balafria.wordpress.com/2008/05/25/an-unsustainable-system/>, Accessed on 29 May 2008.

without any inspirational models. Losing alternatives has harmed global struggle and resistance in two ways. First, resistance movements lost ground against their main rival, capitalism, and thus they have become sensitive to the attacks of their foremost foe. Second, resistance and revolutionary movements have lost their plausibility. When there were real alternatives to capitalism, people were attracted to the socialist cause more easily and committed themselves to leftist opposition movements in a more dedicated way. When there is no available alternative, people start to lose their interest in the resistance movements.

The MST and EZLN are crucial particularly because they have provided leftist oppositions in all over the world with real, living examples. Maybe they were not big political examples, like the Soviet and/or Eastern European ones. In fact, they have not aspired to be such alternatives or vanguards of political revolution for they try to resolve, or not to repeat, the mistakes of classical revolutionary movements or past real socialist experiences. Nonetheless, they have been giving hope and inspiration to the people in all over the world in their resistance against capitalism.

Organization of "classical" social movements rests heavily on the oratory of class, ideology and definition of their own political interests against a clearly understood opponent capitalist class.⁹ These new movements, the MST and EZLN, are more democratic and have non-hierarchic organizational structures. The Zapatistas appear to have achieved a new political system within the framework of collective and democratic decision-making that has developed out of local traditions. For instance, Zapatista communiqués are generally signed by the "Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command" (CCRI-CG), apparently a council of indigenous leaders.¹⁰ Decision-making is also similar within the MST. The MST's rural settlements are characterized by cooperative relations, collective planning and self-management.

⁹ Peter Harries-Jones, "Public Voice: Work, Knowledge and the Relevance of Reflexive Communication," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 15 no.3 (1990), 125.

¹⁰ Harry Cleaver, *Zapatistas! Documents of New Mexican Revolution*, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/Zapatistas/introduction.html>, Accessed 30 May 2008.

Solidarity, social justice and autonomy are among its most fundamental ethical values.¹¹ The MST and EZLN both give importance to cooperation, national and international solidarity as well as identities. In other words, these two movements are open to all good and upright ideas, no matter where they come from.¹²

These two Latin American movements emphasize cooperation and awareness-raising in their undertakings. Their demonstrations at World Social Forums and at international meetings such as the First Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, as well as their marches to the capital cities of their countries and their public addresses to the people, are notable examples of their insistence on international collaboration. In this way, they also become more visible, and find platforms within which to explain their policies to people and listen to other people's ideas and advices in return. After all, even though international meetings such as the WSF have arguably had some downsides, they are still significant for showing the presence and continuity of these newly established resistance groups. Obviously people only with sufficient material and financial resources can attend these meetings; however when the attendees return to their countries, they can share what they saw and heard as well as their experiences with people who are conscious of the drawbacks of capitalism. These meetings might not offer clean-cut solutions or alternatives to the injustices of capitalism, but they definitely reveal the system's failures and the peoples' sufferings. Furthermore, in these meetings, the importance and the agenda of resistance movements have begun to be discussed. Maybe such meetings do not instantly solve problems, but in spite of their pitfalls, they certainly do give hope and inspiration to people to continue their struggles.

One more issue seen in old socialist experiences was that, in general, democracy and human rights were disregarded. Old revolutionaries had only focused on their sole aim of seizing the state power. They thought that a two-step, state-oriented strategy would open the way for revolution. It was believed that unless state power was seized

¹¹ Mônica Dias Martins, "The MST Challenge to Neoliberalism," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 114, Vol. 27 no. 5 (September 2000), 33.

¹² Marta Harnecker, *Landless Movement-Building a Social Movement*, 13, <http://www.rebellion.org/harnecker/landless300802.pdf>, Accessed 6 November 2007.

first, social transformation would not be possible. As a result, classical revolutionary movements did not begin the socialist transformation right away. However, the MST and EZLN do not fall into this trap. They place great importance on the inclusion of people in the transformation process. Details of how the MST and EZLN lead such transformations without seizing the power of the state will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Despite the pessimistic atmosphere the collapse of the Eastern Block had caused in the 1990s, resistance movements such as the MST and EZLN, and some others, such as the WSF or anti-war movements, have been able to influence other people and movements. They show that, regardless of how bad conditions might be, it is still possible to resist and work for an alternative to the hegemony of capitalism. These movements are hence important because of keeping hope alive. While there are no mainstream alternatives or inspirational political experiences in the world, they keep on fighting for a new society and encouraging other countries' people, groups and movements to resist and struggle. Maybe it is too early to say this, but it seems that they will pave the road for a new left despite all their weaknesses. They however have rather important achievements such as prioritizing democracy, respecting diversity and establishing non-hierarchical organizations.

On the basis of these observations, this thesis will question whether the EZLN and the MST movements can truly be alternatives to the real socialist experiences, and whether their political practices can be reproduced elsewhere or they are mainly local success stories. To answer these questions, the thesis will first examine in chapter two the historical conditions that have brought about the rise of these movements. These movements become possible because of the rising resistance against neoliberalism. Without an understanding of the effects of neoliberalism and its destructive impact on countries and peoples' lives, it is impossible to grasp why such resistances have emerged today but not another time. As Subcomandante Marcos maintains, the war being waged

today can be called the Forth World War, between the supporters of neoliberal globalization, and people and movements resisting neoliberalism.¹³

However, it is hard to explain these movements on the basis of global developments only. There are also many national and local factors that have helped these movements develop. In other words, their uniqueness rests on both national and international factors. Their features and experiences can be valuable for other resistance movements around world, but wholesale importation of these movements would be out of the question. As Subcomandante Marcos said, these movements are improving by asking questions rather than simply answering them.¹⁴ Differently put, they are learning from others while sharing simultaneously their experiences. Therefore, these movements can be helpful for others, but not as classical leftist guerrilla tactics to be applied to every country in the same way without first considering the unique features of each country. On the basis of these concerns, the second chapter will also examine some common local and political factors that have shaped the EZLN and the MST. The first significant factor is arguably religion. Liberation theology, and hence the Catholic Church in Latin America, has been very helpful and influential for these resistance movements during their early years. The Church has supported their causes ideologically and materially through clerical support. Liberation theology teaches that one should combat social injustices and maintains that one should not wait for salvation after death. Latin American clergy has broadcasted this idea widely besides joining actively these resistance movements. The Church has offered these movements with material support in the form of food, tents and money. Despite the fact that religion generally works to oppress people, in Latin America is it transformed into a progressive and revolutionary tool. The second factor to be examined is the way powerful leftist political parties in Mexico and Brazil have enabled the rise of these movements. The Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or PT) in Brazil and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or PRI) in Mexico have to be mentioned in this

¹³ Ignacio Ramonet, trans., Kerem Eksen, *Marcos Onurlu İsyankar* (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2001), 22.

¹⁴ RJ Maccini, "The Other Journalism with the Other Campaign on the Other Side," *The Narco News Bulletin*, <http://www.narconews.com/Issue42/article2037.html>, Accessed 30 May 2008.

regard. In Brazil, the opposition formed around the PT and its political struggle encouraged its growing cooperation with the MST. In Mexico, on the other hand, the growing opposition to the PRI has helped the EZLN to attract new supporters. These factors have allowed the MST and the EZLN to grow and develop throughout the years.

In the third and the fourth chapters, the specific histories of the MST and the EZLN will be studied. In Mexico, the first encampment at Chiapas, the armed uprising in 1994, peace negotiations and the San Andres Accords, international meetings, the march to Mexico City, the autonomous municipalities, the Good Government Juntas and other campaigns have all been foundational steps in the history of the EZLN. In Brazil, on the other hand, the land occupation of Macali, the foundation of the Encruzilhada Natalino camp, five National Landless Workers' Meetings, many other land occupations and marches, the WSF, and the foundation of schools and clinics have been the building blocks of the MST journey. Learning from their experiences is crucial in order to observe and appreciate the uniqueness and the important features of these movements. Moreover, their experiences can further give us clues about whether these political movements can provide true alternatives to capitalism, and whether they can fill the gap that the collapse of the real socialisms has created in today's world. Unfortunately, not many sources are available on their development from 1983 to 2007. As a result, these chapters aim to shed light on the emergence and development of the MST and EZLN, which have been continuing for almost two decades now on the basis of the participants' and movements' points of view.

The final chapter before the conclusion will focus on the educational practices within these movements. Education is important because, when it is used to reproduce hegemonic power, it is nearly impossible to create an alternative, new society. Education in capitalism helps the creation of people who never think of the possibility of resistance or change but of becoming good customers and workers for the system. It is a well-known fact that schools transfer culture and values and that they channel children into various social roles. Thus, they help to maintain the current social order.¹⁵ Therefore, the MST and EZLN place a big importance on education as part of their revolutionary

¹⁵ Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: David McKay, 1974), 8.

practices. They recognize the peoples' general need of basic education. The literacy rate is very low among the peasants of both Brazil and Chiapas. The MST and EZLN open schools, offer courses, prepare educational materials and curriculums, and organize other educational activities. Hence chapter five will focus on the experiences of the MST and EZLN in the educational field, presenting answers to such questions as why they place importance on education, which ideas these movements have borrowed for their educational projects, and what they have achieved in this field in their countries. Here the ideas of Gramsci's "organic intellectual" and Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed" are especially important as their ideas have clearly shaped the education projects of the MST and the EZLN. As Gramsci stated, the working class must produce its own organic intellectuals to perform the task of articulating and disseminating the hegemony of their own class over society as a whole.¹⁶ Transforming society and creating a new world can be possible when the whole society joins this process. Hence, the MST and EZLN use education to create consciousness and foster change from the bottom. As members of these movements said: "...We will provide a revolutionary education for our own people... Education is a very dangerous weapon; it marks up minds and consciousness."¹⁷

However, such an education cannot be helpful when hegemonic pedagogy is used. This pedagogy will just enslave people and prepare them for the capitalist system. Under this pedagogy, they become merely workers and customers. The new pedagogy, therefore, has to insist on the awakening of critical consciousness. Moreover, building a sense of social responsibility is the foundation of learning and positive change.¹⁸ By means of these ideas, these movements search for a way of being power without seizing the power. As Holloway puts it, "we do not have to conquer the world." It is enough to

¹⁶ Diana Coben, "Revisiting Gramsci," *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 27 issue 1 (April 1995), 39.

¹⁷ Paul Kingsnorth, *One No, Many Yeses*, (London: Free Press, 2003), 23.

¹⁸ Angus Wright and Wendy Welford, "Now It is Time: The MST and Grassroots Land Reform in Brazil," *Backgrounder* 9 no. 2 (Spring 2003), 3.

reestablish it.¹⁹ Through educational experiences, it is possible to establish new power practices. Hence, chapter five of the thesis will explore whether this ideal is possible through the MST and EZLN educational campaigns.

¹⁹ John Holloway, *İktidar Olmadan Dünyayı Değiştirmek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 37.

Chapter 2: Historical Conditions in Brazil and Mexico that Led to the Rise of the EZLN and the MST

This chapter will discuss the historical conditions that have aided the rise and development of the EZLN and the MST, with a particular emphasis on the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of Brazil and Mexico. Although Latin America is divided into many countries, the Continent has shared many common features since the pre-Columbus, Spanish and Portuguese eras. Over the years, though, territorial division has also created differences in the national and cultures characteristics of the Latin American countries. Hence, the similarities and differences of Brazil and Mexico have helped shape these two movements. To start with the similarities of Brazil and Mexico, they had both fought independence wars against Spain and Portugal respectively. In both countries, people had fought long years for democracy, and still continue to fight. Hence, such factors as their colonial history, independence wars, foreign relations especially with the US, cultural and geographical features make these countries similar in many ways. On the other hand, a military coup was seen in Brazil but not in Mexico, while Mexico had key revolutionary figures such as Zapata, who assembled the people. Hence, issues like the role of the military and the land problem make these countries different in some other ways.

During the period that led to the rise of MST and EZLN, neo-liberal transformation, religion and political deficiencies have been common features of both Mexico and Brazil. MST and EZLN have risen on these shared features of their countries. This chapter will analyze them and explain how they prepared the ground for the rise of these movements in Brazil and Mexico. However, before searching these similarities there is a need to look the general history of these countries.

2.1. A Brief History of Brazil

Most significant clues that led to the formation of MST can be identified in the post-World War II era in Brazil. A brief knowledge of the previous period, however, would also be helpful. The crucial point to keep in mind is that the MST's main struggle for land was the result of the land and agricultural systems established by the Portuguese colonialism. There have been no revolutionary or even reformist change made on this issue in the history of Brazil.

Despite the northern part of the continent, Brazil had not hosted any big civilization such as the Incas or the Aztecs before it was discovered by the Portuguese. Before the Portuguese came, there had been many native tribes, living mostly in isolation from each other. Portuguese had acquired the right to explore Brazil by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. This treaty drew an imaginary line across the American continent and divided it into two for the explorations of the Spanish and the Portuguese.

At the beginning of Brazil's colonization, the Portuguese only transported exploitable wealth back to Europe. After 1530, Portuguese started to settle in Brazil. In time, settlement required an administrative system. Brazil was divided into fourteen captaincies that later shaped the territorial and political patterns of the modern Brazil. Until the beginning of the 19th century, Brazil was the main source of the Portuguese economy. Sugar and coffee plantation and gold mining were the main economic activities in Brazil, which provided the Portuguese with big wealth. Portuguese administration led to the establishment of big farms, *latifundias*. Brazilian economy was based on extracting wealth from the land, and colonial system had never developed or encouraged industrialism in the country. A very small percentage of the population had controlled a vast majority of land. This substantially shaped the economic and political developments as well as social struggles in Brazil after then.

Mainly three groups had been powerful in Brazilian economy and politics. These groups were great landowners, merchants and slave traders. Valuable traded goods such as coffee and sugar were cultivated in *latifundias* by the African slaves. Then few merchants brought them into Europe. This substantially decreased the cost of

agricultural production. The concentration of land and dependence on the export of agricultural goods were significant characteristics of Brazil before independence, and their effects have still been seen today. After industrialization, new classes got power in politics and economics but it has been never possible to solve the land issue. Hence, this land problem, which had caused many social reactions, was also one of the basic reasons that led the MST to rise.

Brazil declared its independence on December 1, 1822. The process of independence started after the invasion of Portugal by France. Napoleon's army invaded Portugal in 1808 and as a result of this, monarch moved to Brazil and stayed there until 1821. When King Joao VI returned to Portugal, he left the Crown Prince in Rio. A year after, the Prince declared the independence of Brazil, himself as its Emperor Pedro I. After a short war, which ended in 1824, Portugal also recognized this independence. After him, his son Pedro II became the king and ruled Brazil until the end of the imperial era in 1888.

The imperial system was replaced with a federal bicameral presidential parliamentary one. This so called Old Republic ended in 1930 during the Great Depression with a movement headed by Getulio Vargas that aimed to reform the political and the electoral system. Old Republic's economy was based on coffee production and trade. Brazil was hence depended on the money that came from the export of coffee as well as foreign loans. After the Old Republic, Vargas governed the country until the end of the Second World War. Industrial and urban classes had started to emerge in the Old Republic but they had acquired more power during Vargas' rule.

Criticisms against the prevailing order increased by the establishment of the Communist Party, in a country where workers rights were tightly controlled by the government. The fear of communism and the rise of fascism in Europe quickly influenced Brazil, and the Vargas government suppressed and forbid both the right and the left wing revolutionary parties. After then, Vargas governed through a dictatorship until the end of the World War II. He cooperated with the Northern landowners against the peasants as well as the workers in Brazil.

A democratic constitution was established in 1946 though the democratic order had quickly been replaced by a military coup in 1964. The first president of the democratic era was General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. Vargas became president again but with an election this time after Dutra's term. After Vargas first Juscelino Kubitschek, then Janio Quadros and Joao Goulart took the presidency chair. Military overthrew Goulart on 31 March 1964 by fearing his Marxist leanings.²⁰ During the post-war era until the military takeover, there was an increasing power of workers through the Communist Party, and the peasants through different organizations as Ligas Campesinas, Ultabs and Master. For instance, in 1946 pressures from the Communist Party succeed in introducing into the text of the Constitution the concept that 'the use of property is subordinated to social well-being', creating legal limits to property rights. Also, Communist Party unified the demand for agrarian reform and labour rights for rural workers.²¹ This period was also the efficient integration of nationalism and industrialization in Brazil. This era can be characterized by economic nationalism, state-guided modernization, and import substitution trade policies. American led economic growth and increasing foreign aid from the US paved the way for the Brazilian miracle.

The contradictions between the masses and the elites had much more to do with elite fears of a mass uprising, supposedly instigated by international communism, than with the reality of social revolution. What the elites elsewhere might have seen as popular democratic mobilization, the Brazilian elites saw as revolutionary change that threatened their well-being.²² At that point, Goulart preferred to act close to left parties and movements. Education reform started, and changes aimed to improve the conditions of the peasants and workers. This brought the end of his presidency and democracy in Brazil. Under the Cold War conditions, Brazil moved to left which US would not let

²⁰ "History" <http://www.brazilianembassy.org.za/links/brazil-in-brief/4-Brazil-HISTORY.pdf> Accessed on 06 September 2008

²¹ Servolo de Medeiros, Leonilde. "Social Movements and the experience of market-led agrarian reform in Brazil" *Third World Quarterly* 28:8 (2007), 1502.

²² "Brazil" http://www.bored.com/ebooks/World_Reference/historical%20context%20--%20country%20studies/brazil.html Accessed on 17 October 2008

happen. When the fears of the elites were linked to the profits of the US, military regime took the control of the country.

The Brazilian economy doubled its per capita income from 1820 to 1940.²³ As mentioned before, the economy of the country was based on agricultural products. Main export goods of the country were coffee, cocoa, rubber and tobacco. Brazil was exporting agricultural goods and raw materials, and buying value-added goods. Because of the importance of agricultural goods for Brazil, it was not possible for the governments take side against landowners or try agricultural reform. This type of economy started to change during the presidency of Vargas in the 1930s. The aim was transform the economy from agricultural to industrial one in which state enterprises takes efficient roles. State made most of its investments on transport, energy and basic industry. State aimed to finish infrastructural investments, which would open the way of industrial expansion. As a result of these, Brazil's per capita income grew by an average of over 3.5 per cent per year. In the period of fastest growth in the 1950s, it grew by more than 4.5 per cent a year.²⁴

Coming to President Joao Goulart, he aimed at universal suffrage, land reform - both rural and urban-, and restrictions on foreign capital and education reform. During his rule, the power of the Communist Party and the peasant movements increased the political tension. Also, the Cuban Revolution affected the whole continent and desire for a similar transformation. Goulart also implemented an education reform -with Freire's and his own ideas-, which would educate millions of illiterate peasant. Struggle of people annoyed the Brazilian elite that owned most of land and wealth of the country, as well as the US, which did not definitely want another Cuban experience. All of these led to the military regime, which governed Brazil during the next two decades. Between 1964 and 1985, Brazil saw five presidents; all were generals in armed forces. Democratic rights of people were suspended. Many individual and collective rights

²³ Fabiano Abraches Silva Dalto. "Government, Market and Development: Brazilian Economic Development in Historical Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hertfordshire, 2007), 61.

²⁴ Dalto, 76.

could not be enjoyed. For instance, collective bargaining was eliminated and strikes were outlawed.²⁵ The first half of the military period was called however as Brazilian Miracle. The falling rates of investment, growth and savings in the first half of the 1960s were conversed by tax and fiscal reforms under the military regime. After tax and finance systems were reorganized by reforms, results started to appear. The tax burden increased from 16 per cent of GDP in 1963 to 22 per cent of GDP in 1966 and then 25 per cent of GDP in 1968.²⁶ There was an extraordinary growth and raise in investments. Between 1968 and 1973, the rate of real growth of GDP was 11.2%. Such a rate could not be reached again for Brazil after then. To deepen import substitution process, government invested 21.2% of the GDP.²⁷ The state's investment spread from basic areas to electricity, petroleum and telecommunication areas.

The Brazilian Miracle and great economic growth ended by the mid seventies. Until the end of 1970s, Brazilian economy continued to grow but not with great rates. During the period 1974 and 1980, the average of Brazilian real growth rate of GDP was 6.9 per cent.²⁸ This slowing down of the economy was the result of oil crises and the problems of national market. Brazil invested a lot and created great production potential but the demand was not so huge and this narrowed the market. What's more, Brazilian export growth rates never exceed world trends. Whenever, world economic boom came to end, Brazilian economy started to slow down also with the effect of oil crises. Government could not reach the figures of the Brazilian Miracle and their aims within the Second National Plan of Development (II PND). So, government left this plan. The investments and social expenditures of the government were cut. The fall in public investment was 32.5 percent in the four years after 1976. This cut was followed by the private sector. The main power of the Brazilian economy was the public enterprises.

²⁵ "History" <http://www.brazilianembassy.org.za/links/brazil-in-brief/4-Brazil-HISTORY.pdf> Accessed on 06 September 2008

²⁶ Dalto, 84.

²⁷ Jennifer Hermann. "Financial Structure and Financing Models: The Brazilian Experience over the 1964-1997 Period" *Journal of Latin American Studies*. Vol.34 No.1 (February 2002), 80.

²⁸ Hermann, 80.

When public cut investment, this affected private sector also. This deepened the economic slow down. GDP growth rate was 7.9 per cent between 1974 and 1976. This rate decreased to 6.5 per cent between 1976 and 1979. From 1979 onwards, when the international crisis got worse and domestic inflation rose (29 per cent in 1975 to 43 per cent in 1978), the government adopted even greater restrictions on public spending.²⁹ The end of the 1970s was the bridge between the state-led economic model and the neoliberal one. Oil crisis, decreasing growth rates and insufficient market size deepened the economic crisis, which was going to end military regime and its economic model. The important thing, which made things worse, was that Brazil continued to use loans to pay her increasing oil bills and old debts.

By 1979, things worsened for Brazil and world economy. Second oil price shock in October and November of 1979 led the doubling of international interest rates. To meet this challenge, President Delfim Netto eliminated export subsidies, corrected public prices and tariffs, eliminated prior deposit on imports and devalued national currency.³⁰ However, none of these precautions could avoid the looming big economic and debt crises at the beginning of the 1980s, neoliberalism was promoted as the remedy to overcome them.

The crisis atmosphere of the 1970s and worsening economic conditions caused more social reactions against the military government. During economic growth, it was easy to keep people under control by economic gains. However, deteriorating economic conditions led people to raise their voices against the military regime and the economic system it protected. In the rural areas, land occupations, within which MST was first recognised, started and workers got increasingly organized. First occupation was Macali during the military period in 1979. Then Macali was followed by Santa Catarina, Parana, Sao Paulo and Mato Grosso do Sul occupations. Military regime could not stop and suppress peasant movements anymore. Mobilizations in the rural areas affected the big cities as well. Workers started to fight for democratic, social and labour rights. Strikes in

²⁹ Dalto, 129–130.

³⁰ Dalto, 143.

big industrial cities such as Sao Paulo paved the way for the rise of Lula as a powerful leader and throughout these events PT was founded.

In 1979, President Joao Baptista Figueiredo began the process of restoring political rights. The aim of these reforms was avoiding a revolution, which would be led by workers and peasants. It was obvious that military regime did not have full support of the US and its economic success came to an end. There was a great opposition to the military government and social opposition demanded the wages to be calculated according to the inflation rate. In the North, Northeast, and even in the relatively prosperous Rio Grande do Sul, rural people seized unused, private lands, forcing the government to create a new land reform ministry. Tensions with the Roman Catholic Church, the major voice for societal change, peaked in the early 1980s with the expulsion of foreign priests involved in political and land reform issues. Many of the exiles returned to Brazil.³¹ In 1982, the country held direct elections for state governors. This was the first election after nearly two decades. In 1984, nationwide demonstrations were made for democracy and immediate direct elections. The aim was accomplished and elections made and after years there was a civil president Almelda Neves in Brazil. Following the formation of the Constituent Assembly, in October 1988 new constitution of Brazil came into force.

While political scene was witnessing such great transformations, economic arena somehow started to be dominated by neoliberal ideas. Brazil economy experienced low economic growth, high inflation tending to hyperinflation and high public deficit during the 1980s. In this process, Brazilian government owned the debt of the private sector, decreased its investments and expenditures. With the advices of IMF, Brazil reduced its domestic expenditures, raised interest rates, and reduced real wages. 1980s was a lost decade for Brazil. During all these years, the state took measures to pay her debts. However, while real net sources, transferred out of Brazil, were more than 75 billion dollars, the total debt still increased from 74 billion dollars to 115 billion dollars. Hence,

³¹ "Brazil" http://www.bored.com/ebooks/World_Reference/historical%20context%20--%20country%20studies/brazil.html Accessed on 17 October 2008.

while Brazil could not reduce her debt, her growth and investments rates decreased and fluctuated during the 1980s. What's more, inflation peaked together with the interest rates, increasing from 46.3 per cent in 1980 to 2407.3 per cent in 1989.³² Government declared many plans to reverse the economic indicators. 1986 Cruzado Plan, 1987 Bresser Plan and 1989 Summer Plan attempted to stabilize the economy but they could not succeed.

Fernando Collor de Mello was elected as president in 1989 according to the new constitutional and election system. Collor can be accepted as the starter of neoliberal structural reforms. First, import tariffs were rapidly decreased. Majority of the non-tariff barriers were abolished in 1990.³³ Then privatizations were launched, and over a decade, 133 public enterprises were privatized. From these privatizations, Brazilian government earned over 105 billion dollars. Other neoliberal structural reforms such as the liberalization of finance followed suit. However, the results were even worse than those of the 1980s. During the 1980s, Brazil's growth rate of GDP was 3.03 per cent and it was only 1.82 per cent in the 1990s.³⁴

Neoliberalism achieved few things in Brazil, the most important one being the price stability shortly after the Real Plan in 1994. The heat of inflation decreased and after years it was taken under control. In 1994, the inflation rate was over 2000 per cent. In one year, it decreased to two digits numbers. The numbers have been never so high after then. The only success of the neoliberal reforms can be its struggle with inflation. These reforms could not increase economic growth. The growth numbers are not even close to their levels during the much-criticized state-led period of the 1960s and 1970s.

Starting from the 1990s, the neoliberal reforms were applied by every new president without opposition. First Itamar Franco from 1992 to 1994, then Fernando Henrique Cardoso was president for two terms till 2002. After Cardoso, Lula da Silva from Workers Party became president of Brazil. There was great hope for his changing

³² Dalto, 160–171.

³³ Edmund Amann and Werner Baer. "Neoliberalism and Its Consequences in Brazil" *Journal of Latin American Studies* Vol.34 No.4 (November 2002), 947–948.

³⁴ Amann and Baer, 950.

the neoliberal policies but Lula could not succeed a lot in this sense. Still, the PT gained more and more electoral support in years and won elections of small municipalities and then states as Sao Paulo. In rural areas on the other hand, the MST gained power and engaged in more occupations and members. More information of their historical progress will be given in the next chapters.

Throughout all these changes, there have been two things that never changed: the concentration of land in few hands, and the huge gap between poor and rich. These two issues are main issues that led to the rise of the MST. Also, neoliberal policies made things worse and the economic conditions of the poor became worse. This was why the MST attracted people's attention and support very quickly starting from the 1990s.

2.2 Short History of Mexico

Mexico's history has similarities with the history of Brazil. However, there are also a lot of differences as well. First of all, while Brazil did not host any central and developed civilization, Mexico was the land of great and warrior civilizations such as the Mayas and the Aztecs. Mayan civilization began to form fifteen centuries before Christ. Maya civilization continued till 1200 AD but its decline started from 900 AD. Then Toltecs gained power and then Aztec empire flourished. Aztec empire ruled Mesoamerica region until Cortes came and ended the whole civilization.

Cortes arrived the Aztec land in 1519 and with the help of the Tlaxcalans, Spanish destroyed the Aztec Empire in 1521. Spanish began to acquire vast fortunes in commodities such as silver, cacao and dyestuffs. This period was a definitely a massacre and also be called as a genocide against Indians. Nearly half of the Indian population died because of the illnesses that came from Europe. Diseases and overwork cut the native population from 12 million in 1520 to one million by 1720. This decrease in population also caused the capture of the African people as slaves in the next centuries.³⁵ Until the independence of Mexico, Spain used Mexico as her main source of empire and

³⁵ "A Snopshot of Mexican History" http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/exhibitions/mexico2/time_line.pdf
Accessed on 14 September 2008

an unequal exchange settled between the two geographies. Besides wealth and power became concentrated in few hands and this concentration caused many struggles and even a revolution in Mexico. Mexico had *haciendas* system similar to *latifundias* in Brazil. Very small group of landowners had the majority of the lands and a very large group of landless poor was generated by this system. Moreover, Mexican economy got depended on the export of raw materials to Europe. For instance, two third of world's silver was supplied by Mexico. This heritage draws the road map of Mexican development and lies behind the political and economic struggles going on in the country.

Mexican reasons of independence were similar to the US. First of all, local middle class got tired from sharing their wealth with Spain. Then, the war began between Spain and France. This caused Spain looked to her colonies to pay her mounting expenses. Also, this war created opportunity to fight for independence. Independence war started and ripened with two priests. First Miguel Hidalgo started the struggle in Dolores. On the way of Mexico City, royalist forces defeated Hidalgo's army. He was executed on 30 July 1811. Then, Jose Maria Morelos took the role of Hidalgo and had some success in western and southern parts of country. However, he could not also see the end and was shot on 22 December 1815. Finally Augustin Iturbide led the independence war and succeeded in this by the help of rebel leaders. On 27th of September, Mexico City was captured and 28 September 1821 was the first day of independent Mexico.

From 1821 to 1857, Mexico was ruled under all sorts of governments from dictatorship to republican governments to monarchies. After independence, Augustin declared the country as empire but this lasted for only a year. Then a junta governed Mexico till the preparation of the 1824 constitution. First president of Mexico was Guadalupe Victoria and then nearly fifty different governments tried to control Mexico for long periods though none of them achieved this. This unstable period was also a period of struggle over Texas and war between Mexico and the US between 1846 and 1848. At the end of this war, Mexico nearly lost half of her land which includes Texas, California and New Mexico for \$15 million.

Under the presidency of Ignacio Comonfort, the constitution of 1857 was made. However, this constitution had very radical elements which caused a division between liberals and conservatives. Some of these radical elements were the abolishment of the privileges of military and Church, restrictions on Church holdings, prohibition of slavery, and secularization of education and guarantees of civil liberties. These economic and political reforms damaged the interests of the conservatives and led to the War of Reform. Important thing about those reforms was that they were not coming from the people but from few liberal politicians. This was a reform that was imposed from the top so that the reforms remained incomplete for the majority of the people. This was also one of the reasons behind the Mexican Revolution in 1910s.

The War of the Reform continued for three years and during this time conservative presidents ruled Mexico. Then liberals reoccupied Mexico City. Benito Juarez became president but his precautions as delaying debt payments to fix Mexican economy did not favour by Spain, Great Britain and France. France re-established monarchy in Mexico and Maximilian, Austrian archduke, became new emperor between 1864 and 1867. Opposition to the monarch was so strong that it could not continue. The republic was re-established in 1867. Then, a new period started for Mexico, which was characterized by Porforio Diaz.

Porforio Diaz' period was a period of political stability and economic growth. Diaz period could be named as order and progress. After a half century of war, civil war and disorder in politics, Diaz governed Mexico over three decades. Under such conditions, it was also not possible for Mexico to make sustainable economic growth before Diaz. Stabilization in Mexico attracted foreign capitalists to invest there.³⁶ Also, the discovery of oil in Mexico at the end of 19th century increased the flow of money. These investments were mainly used to construct railroads and the development of the communication systems. Mexican government invested on infrastructure and wish to attract more investment and development in industry and trade.

Mexico achieved a lot in this period. The railroad system was only 800 kilometres in 1876 but reached to more than 19000 kilometres by 1910 during the Diaz

³⁶ Burton, Kirkwood. "History of Mexico" (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 116

period. Average Mexican growth was more than 8 per cent during this period. However, this growth was mainly absorbed by the elites. In rural areas, land became valuable by the railroad, land speculators and commercialisation of agriculture. Peasants lost their lands in this period and forced to move big cities especially to Mexico City. About 90 per cent of the rural families had still no land at the end of the Diaz period. Cities however did not meet the needs of so much people. Workers have to work under very bad conditions for very low wages. The strategy of economic development depended on low wages of workers with foreign investment and export. So, most of the population could not benefit from the economic growth and was governed under a dictatorship which did not allow them to benefit from the rights they acquired by the 1857 Constitution. In 1893, infant mortality (death before the age of one) was 323 per thousand in Mexico City as opposed to London's 114 and Boston's 120. In 1895 life expectancy was 30 years and the 1910 census classified 50 percent of Mexican houses as unfit for human habitation. A 1900 survey in Mexico City showed that 15,000 families (16 percent of the population) were homeless. Hence, the accumulated wealth was not trickling down.³⁷ This led to workers' oppositions but most of the were either ignored or crushed by the government. For instance, there was labor unrest with major strikes at the Orizaba, Veracruz textile mill in 1906-07 and in copper mines at Cananea, Sonora in 1906. In the latter strike, Díaz allowed foreigners, Arizona state rangers, to cross the border to quash the strike, killing workers. Things were not so good for the peasants as well. They worked on *haciendas* for little wages. These economic and political conditions were basic reasons that led to revolution in Mexico.

Diaz period ended by the treaty of Ciudad Juarez in 1911 and a civil war started between revolutionary movements struggle for dominance. Civil war or Mexican revolution had continued for a decade. Francisco Madero became president after Diaz's exile to France. However, Madero could not either succeed to respond the wish of people. Different groups understood different things from revolution which caused a

³⁷ "Democrat to Autocrat: The Transformation of Porfirio Diaz"
http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtporfdiaz.html Accessed on 20 October 2008.

decade long ongoing struggle. Victoriano Huerta took control after Madero. However, Huerta could not achieve full control over the Mexico. Presidency changed many times after then but mostly Venustiano Carranza controlled the country. In 1916, election called for constitutional convention. The constitution was announced on 5 February 1917. This constitution shaped the new state of Mexico. Three characteristics of the state above all others were representative democracy, presidential dictatorship and corporatism.³⁸ Also, Article 27 guaranteed communal right of land and restored subsoil rights to own minerals and especially oil by Mexican nation. Article 123 gave rights to workers and created a balance between workers and economic elites. Article 130 limited the Church and gave the state control over it. These three articles symbolized new constitution and its radical features.

During the revolution years, two important figures raised the spirit of struggle and resistance in Mexico: Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Especially Zapata became the heroic figure of revolution. Even today, he named the most important movement of Mexico, the EZLN. Zapata's experience in the south of Mexico and his Plan de Ayala inspired many people, and still have effects on different groups and movements. The importance of Zapata and Villa was that they showed the possibility of revolution in Mexico.

With the election of Alvaro Obregon, stability returned to Mexico after 10 years of struggle. This period until the end Cardenas presidency was the continuation of the Mexican revolution. Liberal experimentation and development in peasants and workers' life was seen in this period. Most successful achievements for them had been done in this period. The end of Cardenas period was also the end of the Mexican revolution.

To understand why, one needs to investigate closely the Cardenas period. Firstly, improving and developing Mexico in all manners could not be possible without education. Educational reform had been launched by Jose Vasconcelos, Obregon's minister of education. The reforms continued in the periods of President Calles and President Cardenas. These reforms aimed to create educational opportunities for

³⁸ Juan Felipe, Leal. "The Mexican State: 1915-1973 A Historical Interpretation" *Latin American Perspectives* Vol.2 No.2 (Summer 1975), 54.

everyone, decrease the role of Church and include sex and socialist agenda into education.³⁹ Land reform had also been forced before Cardenas, but the most significant turning point was the era of his presidency. Under his presidency the railroads and oil industry were nationalized. State increased its role in economy and became more powerful to give direction all sectors of economy. Party of the Mexican Revolution established in 1938 in which the role and power of labour increased. Moreover, Mexican government distributed almost 50 million acres of land. This was more than twice the amount distributed by any previous presidents since 1917.⁴⁰

After Cardenas, Camacho became the president and governed Mexico during the war. The era beginning with Camacho had most direct affects on today's Mexico. If it is needed to formulize, great economic development and growth but also getting away from revolution and turning to right had characterised this period. During this era, like Brazil, Mexico also experiences an economic miracle. For instance, 120 per cent growth in industry and 100 per cent growth in agricultural was seen during this period. On the other hand, labour's rights were restricted and land reforms policies were ignored. Workers and peasants survived due to their gains during Cardenas.

The economy was based on import substitution industrialization model till the crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. State intervened in the economy by owning companies, building infrastructure that private sector could not achieve by itself and support private sector with different tools such as subsidies. For instance, President Aleman built dams along the nation's major river systems, roads and international airport in Mexico City. In his time, state fully controlled labour movement through unions directly linked to the government. Also, President Alemán was the chief architect of new departures in the official party, including the change of its name from the Party of the Mexican Revolution to the PRI. PRI became the name of state till the end of century. All oppositions and drawbacks had to be within party. The PRI did not let any challenge to

³⁹ Kirkwood, 159.

⁴⁰ Kirkwood, 171.

its rule. Parallel to the economic successes, this aim could be achieved until the end of 1960s.

Until 1968, everything was very fine for PRI. Mexico wished to crown miracle with the prestigious of Olympic games. However, 1968 atmosphere affected student movements, which wanted to react against social injustices and anti-democratic applications during the Games. The outcome was however a disaster. Protest demonstration in Tlatelolco Plaza ended with police fire. More than 100 people died there despite officially 39 deaths were accepted. This was a turning point for PRI. Political disappointments were going to be linked with economic disaster during the 1970s and 1980s.

Luis Echeverria was elected as president in 1970. Inflation began to occur in his first years. Government responded to this by increasing government expenditures and subsidies. However, this could not achieve economic stability or lower inflation. Moreover, Echeverria's policies caused the rise of the national debt. President Portilla after Echeverria continued the same way. Also, discovery of new oil lands and increasing oil prices caused flush of money into Mexico. Mexico only delayed the problems that had to be faced. These problems were increasing foreign indebtedness, overvaluation of the peso and growing current-account imbalances.⁴¹ Despite the signals seen in 1971-72 and 1975-76 recessions, 1982 debt crisis uncovered everything and absolutely ended Mexican economic miracle.

After 1982, state role in the economy and import subsidised model was fiercely criticized and neoliberal transformation started in Mexico. It was declared that neoliberal reforms would solve the problems but as in Brazil the results were not so good for the majority. Under the presidency of De la Madrid, neoliberal transformation started through the directions of IMF. First of all, Mexico reduced its expenditures in GDP and eliminated artificial price controls on many goods.⁴² The next movement was the

⁴¹ Diane E., Davis. "The Dialectic of Autonomy: State, Class, and Economic Crisis in Mexico, 1958–1982" *Latin American Perspectives* Vol.20 No.3 (Summer 1993), 50.

⁴² Kirkwood, 202.

privatization of public enterprises. Mexico privatized railways, telecommunication, natural gas distribution, electrical energy providers, satellites, ports, airports, banks and even social security system. Then, regulations in finance and protect national industry eliminated in 1989. This resulted in the increase of foreign direct investment.⁴³ Trade liberalization succeeded in many ways in 1994 by NAFTA.

As expected, the neoliberal reforms did not cheer up many. During the 1990s, the percentage of urban workers employed fell from 73.9 to 61.2, the percentage of unpaid workers rose from 4.6 to 12, and the percentage of self-employed increased from 16.6 to 22.8.⁴⁴ Also, the real wage in manufacturing in 2004 was still only 70% of the level in 1980.

The conditions were not better for peasants either. Article 27 prevented the peasants to sell their lands on their own. Change in this article led to the privatization of *ejidos*. Wealthy Mexicans and foreign agro-businessmen easily took the land from peasants and this caused more unemployed either to work for low wages in the rural areas or turn into potential workers for factories. Poor peasants sold their lands and this resulted in the concentration of land in a few hands. These few landowners run for profit and made export-oriented agriculture. Mechanization in agriculture made many peasants lose their jobs and lands, and move to cities. This was also one of the reason why real wage could not rise and still at its level in the 1980s. Real wages were nearly half of the 1975 rate in 2005.⁴⁵

The final point to be mentioned on Mexican history was the change in political rulers. PRI had ruled the country for over half a century that ended in 2000 election with the victory of PAN. Three events apart from the economy were significant to see reasons of the decreasing credit of PRI in politics. First one is 1968 events during the Olympic games, mentioned above. Second one is the 1985 Mexico City earthquake. More than

⁴³ Paul, Cooney. "The Decline of Neoliberalism and the Role of Social Movements in Latin America", *Alternativas al Capitalismo* (23-25 March 2006, Barcelona), 13.

⁴⁴ Martin, Hart-Landsberg. "Challenging Neoliberal Myths: A Critical Look at the Mexican Experience" *Monthly Review* (December 2002), 20.

⁴⁵ Martinez and Baeza, 72.

20000 people died and government could not react immediately. People got organized by them and fulfilled their needs by self-organizations and movements. Moreover, torture chambers in government buildings were revealed whose existence the government had routinely denied.⁴⁶ The third issue was the 1988 election. PRI won this election while everyone expected the victory of the PRD. PRI used its power to change the results and lost the trust of people again.

As a result of all these events, EZLN found suitable conditions to start an armed raise and then widen the struggle. Worsening economic conditions by neoliberal reforms and the desire of people to use social and democratic rights were two main reasons that led EZLN and many other social movements to rise in Mexican politics. EZLN achieved its success by combining all of these into its struggle.

2.3. Political Deficiencies in Brazilian and Mexican Politics

The main reason for analyzing political parties is that they become either symbols of neoliberalism or symbols of opposition to neoliberalism. People see political parties as guilty of applying the neoliberal, anti-democratic policies that destroy their lives, and therefore avoid them in their personal efforts to earn money to satisfy the needs of their families. However, political parties can also act in an opposite fashion. In these conditions, political parties become the hope of the people for ending neoliberal policies and anti-democratic conditions and reversing neoliberalism's destruction of people's lives, letting people express their voices in democratic ways. As a result, it is important to investigate the political parties of Mexico and Brazil in which either neoliberalism or opposition to neoliberalism appear. In Mexico, PRI has been a visible face of neoliberalism and anti-democracy; in contrast, in Brazil, PT has been a symbol of opposition to neoliberalism and hope for democratic changes.

⁴⁶ Kirkwood, 203

2.3.1. Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico

PRI governed Mexico for 47 years in an autocratic way.⁴⁷ The PRI was the final incarnation of the pro-revolutionary party, the First National Revolutionary Party (PNR), founded by President Calles in 1929 as a loose confederation of local political bosses and military strongmen grouped together with labor unions, peasant organizations and regional political parties. In its early years, it served primarily as a means for organizing and containing the political competition among the leaders of the various revolutionary factions. President Cardenas reorganized the PNR in 1938, renaming it the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) and giving the PRM an inner organization divided by sectors: labor, agrarian, popular and military. Different parts of society made politics from party. As a result of being one party, only way to make politics was inside of party. Moreover, ignorance of groups from party could cause opposition from outside or revolutionary tries. So, PRI organized in a shape that different groups could raise their voices. In 1946, President Manuel Ávila Camacho abolished the military sector, shifted its members into the popular sector and renamed the party the PRI.⁴⁸ After then, party was more civil, and the army after wars and revolutions was taken finally out of politics.

As it discussed above; until the 1970s, Mexico experienced an economic miracle under the PRI government. PRI succeed a lot in economy. For instance, the GDP increased six-fold, and the population only doubled while the peso-dollar parity was maintained.⁴⁹

After this period, however, PRI performance significantly worsened. Harsher economic conditions coupled with widespread anti-democratic government practices prepared the way for the decay of the political party. The years between 1970 and 1982

⁴⁷ Martinez and Baeza, 73.

⁴⁸ "Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)," <http://countrystudies.us/mexico/84.htm> , Accessed 05 December 2007.

⁴⁹ "Institutional Revolutionary Party," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional_Revolutionary_Party, Accessed 17 December 2007.

were a tragic period for Mexico. Socio-economic problems deepened and neither President Echeverria nor President Portillo's economic politics could avoid the coming 1982 crisis.⁵⁰ On top of this, as it said above -39 people were killed according to officials- the student protests at the 1968 Olympic Games on 2 October. The government's harsh reaction was a typical example of an oppressive regime. No opposition to the government or its policies was tolerated. As such, the financial crisis and protests had a significant impact on the decreasing level of the PRI's public support.

Within a decade, the PRI had lost nearly half of its voters. Until that time, PRI won elections with a high majority. The PRI received its lowest margin of victory ever in 1988 elections, a dubious 50.7% of all votes cast, down from 71.6% in 1982 and 98.7% in 1976.⁵¹ Economic failure, crisis and social pressure for democracy deeply affected the PRI and caused this great loss of votes. Furthermore, the PRI faced internal divisions by the 1980s. The members of the Democratic Current were expelled from the party and went on to form the National Democratic Front (FDN)⁵² in 1987.⁵³ The more nationalist wing of the PRI came together under the National Action Party (PAN), which took the presidency from the PRI for the first time under the leadership of Vicente Fox in the 2000 elections.

The PRI era thus ended in 2000. Until 2000 election, people from inside and outside the PRI had struggled to change the party's policies. One-party government under the control of small elite inhibits democratization and excludes the people. Also, one-party government can shape the economy along its own wishes, despite the fact that

⁵⁰ Aylin Topal, "Meksika'nın Neoliberalleşme ve Demokratikleşme Süreçlerinin Kesişim Kümesi: Yerelleşme Reformları," *Praxis* No.14 (Winter/Spring 2006), 158.

⁵¹ "Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)," <http://countrystudies.us/mexico/84.htm>, Accessed 5 December 2007.

⁵² The National Democratic Front (*Frente Democrático Nacional*) was a coalition of left-wing Mexican political parties created during the 1988 presidential elections, and it is the immediate antecedent of the Party of the Democratic Revolution. It was result of an agglutination of small political left and center-left forces with dissident members of the PRI. The candidate was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas ("National Democratic Front (Mexico)," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Democratic_Front_%28Mexico%29, Accessed 14 January 2008.)

⁵³ "Institutional Revolutionary Party," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional_Revolutionary_Party, Accessed 17 December 2007.

it harms people's lives and worsens the economic conditions in general. Especially after President Cardenas, labor sector of party excluded and few managers from official union became the spokesman of whole workers. Officially party based on labor sector, peasants and merchants and middle class. However, in years party started to follow benefits of big land owners, traders and industry owners not the majority of society which is sum up of workers and peasants. This lead people to struggle against PRI and organized around other political parties and social movements. This point also is very helpful in rise of EZLN and keeps in mind while evaluating the movement.

As mentioned above, neoliberal policies did not positively influence Mexico. While it was evident that neoliberalism could not fulfill its own promises and was worsening the economic outlook, the PRI continued to apply neoliberal policies such as liberalization of the financial system and the cutting of social funds. In addition to such poor economic policies, the PRI continued its anti-democratic practices and acted as a barrier to free speech, as exemplified by the 1988 election. This election resulted in the victory of the Democratic National Front's candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. However, the election was rigged and the PRI's candidate, Salinas, was declared the new president of Mexico. Official returns from Mexico's 1988 presidential election showed the ruling party winning just over 50% of the vote, compared to about 30% for the leftist National Democracy Front. Accusations of ballot box stuffing, ballot manipulation fraud and computer glitches manufactured to throw the election to Salinas were hurled at the PRI by opposition parties when Salinas declared victory with 51% of the votes. Cárdenas argued that he was the actual winner and many international election observers agreed, but the election was plagued by widespread corruption.⁵⁴

Therefore, those who opposed the PRI sought to change neoliberal policies and create more a democratic Mexico, where people could use their civic rights and these rights could not be stolen by a lucky few.

⁵⁴ Louie Matrisciano, "The Turning Point of the PRI: An Analysis of the 1988 Presidential Election in Mexico," <http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=155>, Accessed 23 July 2008.

Receiving help from those in the Chiapas region who had long been suffering from neoliberal policies, the EZLN had been preparing itself for an uprising for ten years. The Zapatistas had repeatedly called for increased autonomy from the ruling PRI, so that indigenous people could preserve their traditional style of government while receiving outside support.⁵⁵ The EZLN stood against the 70-year, one-party rule of the PRI in Mexico, but especially took issue with the oppression that this reign has wrought on the people of Mexico.⁵⁶ The EZLN composed its opposition to the system and the PRI with the people's own resistance and struggle. The ceasefire and peace negotiations after the 1994 armed uprising began with the great support of the people. One of the reasons that people supported the EZLN was because they were opposed to the PRI government and its anti-democratic and neoliberal policies. If there had been public support for the PRI and its government, it would not have been so easy for the EZLN to gain opposition supporters.

⁵⁵ Antonio Luper, "Fox and EZLN: The Zapatista Rebellion in Mexico," *International Trade* 26 no. 2 (Summer 2004), <http://www.harvardir.org/articles/1232/>, Accessed 3 May 2008.

⁵⁶ <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/comment/why.html>, Accessed 3 May 2008.

2.3.2. The Workers' Party in Brazil

In Brazil, just like in Mexico, a party led societal opposition, but in a slightly different way. While the PRI caused social movements to rise against it as adversaries, the Workers' Party (PT)⁵⁷ in Brazil fostered social movements and, in return, received support from these social movements in establishing opposition to the government and neoliberalism. From the beginning, the PT reached out to ally different social groups and classes with the working class. The PT made these groups' salvation and improvement an inseparable part of its politics. The most important group in this process is, of course, Brazil's huge population of poor and landless peasants. The MST was in large part formed in the wake created by the PT's own organization, and it always walked together with the PT.⁵⁸

Military forces took office in Brazil in a coup d'état in 1964 and remained in power until 1985.⁵⁹ From the late 1970s, the MST emerged and became visible as part of the country's democratic transition. In this transition, the PT had great importance. It acted as the vanguard in this struggle for democracy. Important figures from the party as Lula and other members actively joined the strikes at the end of 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. After the military government was thrown out of power, the PT began showing itself more in politics. The increasing electoral power of the PT and its expanding presence in the municipal government of several important cities were also

⁵⁷The *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party, or PT) is a left-wing political party in Brazil. It was officially founded by a group of intellectuals and workers on February 10, 1980 at Colégio Sion (Sion High School) in São Paulo. Brazil's current president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, was one of its founders, and is the most famous member of the party at the present time. The PT was legally recognized as a political party by the Brazilian Electoral Superior Court on February 11, 1982. The color of the party is red, and its symbol is a red "PT" star with the "PT" label in white. The flag of the party is an inverted white "PT" star on a red background. There are about thirty factions (*tendências*) within the PT, ranging from *Articulação*, the center-left group that Lula is a part of, to Marxists and Christian socialists. Its members are known as *petistas*, from the Portuguese acronym "PT". The party is recognized as one of the most important left-wing parties of Latin America ("Workers' Party (Brazil)," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers%27_Party_%28Brazil%29, Accessed on 15 January 2008.).

⁵⁸ Sungur Savran, "Brezilya'da Lula Faciası," *Praxis* 14 (Winter/Spring 2006), 125–126.

⁵⁹ "Brazil," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil>, Accessed 10 December 2007.

important catalysts for the growing social movements in Brazil. Experiences and successes in these cities led many people to join social movements more actively.

The PT's growing power also helped synchronize other social movements and judicial fields. The MST and the PT emerged out of the same process of political mobilization that helped produce the transition to democracy, and they have since maintained close ties.⁶⁰ Strikes, demonstrations and other activities were made in cooperation against the military government. In their organizations, Lula and other trade union leaders who took important roles in the PT gained significant importance. By calling for a new constitution and the democratization of Brazil, they established the PT and in time they came to power. Lessons from that ongoing process were important for the development of the MST and other social movements. The participatory democracy and economic experiences of municipalities under the control of the PT and the World Social Forum⁶¹ particularly helped in the democratic struggles. The MST used the opportunities provided by the PT and acted in the arena created by the PT. The PT is not a mere basic thing that helped in the establishment of the MST, but rather a significant foundation. The MST and the PT share their members; many peasants have membership in both groups. Their growth is parallel. As Pedro Stedile, one of the leaders of the MST, said in an interview,

The MST has historical connections to the PT—both were born during the same time period. In the countryside there are many activists who helped to form the PT and work for the MST, and vice versa. There's been a natural overlap of giving mutual assistance, while always

⁶⁰ Peter P. Houtzager, "The Movement of the Landless (MST), Juridical Field, and Legal Change in Brazil," in Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Cesar A. Rodriguez-Garavito, eds., *Law and Globalization From Below: Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 234.

⁶¹ The World Social Forum (WSF) is an annual meeting held by members of the anti-globalization (using the term globalization in a doctrinal sense, not a literal one) or alter-globalization movement to coordinate world campaigns, share and refine organizing strategies, and inform each other about movements from around the world and their issues...The WSF was sponsored, in part, by the Porto Alegre government, led by the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) ("World Social Forum," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum, Accessed 31 January 2008.).

maintaining a certain autonomy. The majority of our activists, when they opt for a party, generally choose the PT.⁶²

While there is a close connection between the PT and the MST, the latter was never completely or inextricably linked to the PT and its politics. The MST has always defended its autonomy vigorously. Many of its members are also members in the PT or different religious organizations, but the MST does not allow itself to be led by the PT or by any other organizations.

This autonomy is the result of their educational guidelines, as Harnecker has observed. These guidelines create the type of staff and leaders capable of making the organization succeed. One other fact about the relation between the MST and the PT is that the MST is able to criticize wrong politics of the PT, as a result of their autonomy. When the PT did not do enough to generate agricultural reforms, the MST continued to undertake land occupations on its own, despite the two organizations' close links. When Lula turns away from leftist politics and establishes close links with neoliberal politics, the MST raises its voice. In 2003, the MST made a great march to the capitol city in order to criticize the PT politics that it perceived to be flawed.

While the PT engaged the government and the MST occupied lands, each of them has supported the other to make reforms easier. However, the MST never let the PT lead the movement and never let movement become a mere branch of the other party. The MST preserves its own autonomy with many different instruments, primarily education. This allows the MST to continue land occupations under any conditions and gives it the right to criticize the PT when it believes that the PT has done something wrong.

While PT emerged from same sources of MST, why there is a distinction between them. This mostly laid on PT's policies. In years, MST developed itself and made important changes in movement but never give up the main ideas. In contrast, PT - after many electoral defeats after 1989 elections till the 2002 victory- made some moves to the right. In first times, aims and words were more radical and PT was more like a

⁶² Joao Pedro Stedile, "Landless Battalions," *New Left Review* 15 (May-June 2002), <http://www.newleftreview.org/A2390>, Accessed 3 May 2008.

proletariat party. However, Lula and other leaders saw that to win elections, they have to soften their words and programs and cooperate with right wing parties. In 2002 election, Lula showed a businessman Jose Alencar from Liberal Party as vice-president. Also, Lula declared Brazil will pay its debt and continue to cooperate with IMF. PT achieved many things as fight against hunger in Brazil but in time there is gap occurred between movements and party. So, MST again depended on people and its own power to change something. This experience also shows why MST protects autonomy and gives too much importance on it.

2.3. The Role of Religion and the Church

Above, neoliberal and political conditions analyzed to see how they led these movements' raise. While analyzing the conditions in which the EZLN and the MST took root, it is clear that religion, the Church and especially Liberation Theology⁶³ have also played a very important part. The role of Liberation Theology cannot be ignored, neither in the case of Brazil nor in the case of Mexico. In Mexico, supporters of liberation theology and other progressive branches of the Catholic Church support the poor and their movements. However, the effects of liberation theology in Brazil are even more visible.

In Mexico, the armed uprising of the EZLN began in early 1994 and ended within a few weeks, under pressure from civil society, the army and the government. The bishop of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Samuel Ruiz, took a very important role in

⁶³ "Liberation theology is a school of theology within the Catholic Church that focuses on Jesus Christ as not only the Redeemer but also the Liberator of the oppressed. It emphasizes the Christian mission to bring justice to the poor and oppressed, particularly through political activism...At its inception, liberation theology was predominantly found in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council. It is often cited as a form of Christian socialism, and it has enjoyed widespread influence in Latin America and among the Jesuits...In essence, liberation theology explores the relationship between Christian, particularly Roman Catholic, theology and political activism, particularly in areas of social justice, poverty and human rights" ("Liberation Theology," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_theology, Accessed 30 December 2007.).

ending the armed struggle and in starting negotiations between the EZLN and the government. Since the 1994 uprising, Ruiz has been the area's chief mediator, trying to establish peace in the southernmost corner of Mexico, where indigenous communities, led by the Zapatista guerrilla group, are fighting to preserve their traditions and ensure just treatment from both the federal government and the local oligarchy.⁶⁴ Bishop Ruiz explained their role and view in an interview as follows:

...Our role is to seek the unity and reconciliation of all the different groups in Chiapas...There can be no peace if there is no justice. Justice means bringing down from their throne those who are privileged and elevating those who are humble to the same heights. We need real unity, not some people overrunning others...⁶⁵

Not only Ruiz but also other religious men have actively joined the struggles of the EZLN. It is claimed there are 134 religious and clergy involved in the EZLN.⁶⁶ Religious have impacted and supported the movement not only through their ideas, but also by providing members. The idea of resisting and struggling against the injustice and inequity that shapes life in Mexico and the world is strongly supported by liberation theology. The idea of bringing the Kingdom of God to the world rather than passively waiting for it to arrive forces and encourages people to join the movement and take active part in the struggle. Religion lets people react, not just wait for salvation in another world. To clarify the importance of religion in Mexico, when asked to define their religious persuasion, 95% of Mexicans report that they are Christians, with 89% identifying as Roman Catholic and 47% attending church services weekly. In absolute terms, after Brazil, Mexico has the world's largest population of Catholics.⁶⁷ Clearly, religion is important in both the shaping of national identity and in the shaping of

⁶⁴ "Interview with Samuel Ruiz," http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/comment/ruiz_interview.html, Accessed 4 January 2008.

⁶⁵ "Interview with Samuel Ruiz."

⁶⁶ "Catholic fractures widen in Mexico. (division in the church)," <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-16743096.html>, Accessed 6 January 2008.

⁶⁷ "Mexico," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico#Religion>, Accessed 7 January 2008.

resistance movements. When clergy is against the neoliberal economy and its supporters, people can then identify themselves with movements such as the EZLN more easily. As a result, religion is important in the growth of the EZLN.

As stated above, Brazil has the world's largest population of Catholics. Religion is an important part of people's daily lives. Clear evidence of this can be seen in the practices of the MST. The *mística* of the MST carries clear signs of Catholicism. The basis of the MST's *mística* is the culture of the peasantry. *Mística* can translate into English as mysticism, millenarianism and mystique, but none of these words exactly communicate the Portuguese meaning. *Mística*, in this sense, is understood to be a symbolic political representation and a social movement framework for the interpretation and articulation of a counter-hegemonic alternative by MST participants; in other words, it is cognitive praxis.⁶⁸ It is anchored in the telluric energy of the peasants who call for participation and recognition. Values and feelings feed this *mística*. It is also influenced by two important mystical currents: the Christian and the Marxist.⁶⁹ Parallel to the example of the EZLN, religion does not feed and support the MST in solely abstract ways. The Church has also supported the MST with its clergy, organizations and land. As a result, the MST was able to make use of these advantages to become hugely powerful within Brazil.

The most important religious organization that supports the MST has been the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT). From the mid-1970s onward, priests and laymen have traveled the countryside together, proclaiming the need for peasants to organize and struggle to solve their problems not in heaven, but here on earth.⁷⁰ Perhaps it is somewhat pretentious, but it is claimed that the MST originated in southern Brazil as the

⁶⁸ Daniela Issa, "Praxis of Empowerment: *Mística* and Mobilization in Brazil's Landless Rural Workers' Movement," *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 153, Vol. 34 no.2 (March 2007), 126.

⁶⁹ Plínio Arruda Sampaio, trans. Plínio Arruda Sampaio, *The Mística of the MST*, <http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-05.phtml?rd=MSTICAOF657&ng=e&sc=3&th=42&se=0>, Accessed 8 January 2008.

⁷⁰ Marta Harnecker, *Landless Movement-Building a Social Movement*, 19, <http://www.rebellion.org/harnecker/landless300802.pdf>, Accessed on 6 November 2007.

result of the ecumenical CPT efforts to link peasants involved in land struggles.⁷¹ During this period, clergy and the agents of the Church acted as organic intellectuals for the poor and landless peasants. Ongoing difficult economic and social conditions disturbed the Church and they reacted against this. While the Church gave the movement men and ideological support, it also gave more material support.

The material support can be either places for meetings or things that are needed during occupations, such as food. The church itself, that is, the building, is the meeting point for peasants and the MST. During these meetings, the MST explains itself, its aim and the need for land occupation. These meetings can continue for months until enough families decide to join the movement. While this is going on, the Church is both a location place for the meetings, in its buildings, and simultaneously an actor to help convince peasants to join the occupation. When the occupation starts, the Church gives food, tents and other materials that families need.

Completely secular and nondenominational, the MST still undeniably has its roots in the socio-religious culture of what could be called "liberation Christianity." We cannot understand its origins without also alluding to the role of the Brazilian Church and in particular the Pastoral Land Commission.⁷² The bishops and superiors of religious orders in Brazil's central western region published a document entitled "The Cry of the Churches" in 1973. In its conclusion, it states:

Capitalism must be defeated: it is the greatest evil, the accumulated sin, the rotten root, the tree that produces all these fruits which we know so well: poverty, hunger, disease, death.... For this reason, we must pass beyond private ownership of the means of production (factories, land, commerce, banks).⁷³

⁷¹ Miguel Carter, "The Landless Rural Workers' Movement and Agrarian reform in Brazil," Working Paper CBS-60-05, Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford (October 2003), 4.

⁷² Michael Löwy, "The Socio-Religious Origins of Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement," *Monthly Review* 52 no.8 (June 2001), 33.

⁷³ Löwy, 34

Liberation theology, the Catholic Church and the CPT are all feeding sources of the peasant movement, the struggle for land and the MST. The CPT was an early school for MST members who went on to later become leaders of the MST itself. Therefore, it is important to keep religious influences in mind when examining the MST's rise to power in Brazil. On the other hand, the EZLN was also influenced and supported by religious organizations, but not as clearly as in the Brazilian case. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Church and religion have not been important or can be eliminated in the understanding of EZLN history. Religion is still important in an understanding of the roots of the EZLN.

2.4. Conclusion

The people of Mexico and Brazil have suffered from poor economic conditions. Even while the world overall was witnessing a great economic boom, most citizens of these countries did not see benefits. The national economic outlooks even worsened when a crisis hit at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. People grasped the drawbacks of hard-line neoliberalism and saw that it could not solve social and economic problems, and so they stood up against it. The MST and the EZLN became the main movements in this struggle and people organized around them. The EZLN struggled against neoliberalism with the goal of ensuring native rights and a democratic Mexico. The MST, meanwhile, organized its struggle around the theme of land occupation.

The issues that the EZLN and MST chose to resist only continued to worsen under neoliberal policies. Restrictions of the democratic rights of the people, worsening living conditions, unfair land distribution and declining agricultural conditions have been the main complaints of these movements. The MST and EZLN are clearly reacting against neoliberalism.

During this time, the Catholic Church and ideas of liberation theology markedly influenced and supported these movements. Encouraging people to struggle and work to

create an alternative political system becomes easier with the cooperation of religious institutions. People are more willing to cooperate with these social movements thanks to the words of clergy and the material support of the Church. The MST benefits from this more, but the EZLN has also grown as a result of support from the clergy, as exemplified by the role of Bishop Samuel Ruiz during the San Andres Accords.

Political parties also affected both of these movements, although in opposite directions. In Brazil, the leading political party, the PT, supported the MST, while in Mexico, the EZLN grew stronger as a result of its opposition to the PRI. In other words, the MST got support from a legal party that was part of the political system and the EZLN received support because of its opposition to a legal political party.

This chapter has demonstrated the deep consequences of global neoliberalism in the cases of Mexico and Brazil. At the same time, local effects such as local Christian teachings and political parties also affect these movements. Therefore, it is hard to say that the MST and the EZLN are completely global movements or that their experiences are results of solely global effects. It is therefore impossible for other locally based social movements to exactly replicate the experiences of the MST or the EZLN in other parts of the world.

Many local conditions that have been crucial in the development of the MST and the EZLN cannot be found in other parts of world. As an example, in other social movements, religion is often exploited by conservatives and by groups who profit from the maintenance of a certain political system. Change of the status quo system is generally not desired by religion and its clergy. In the cases of the MST and EZLN, however, religion became a catalyst for change. It is obvious then that it is not possible to exactly replicate their roots in different soil, but as it will be discussed in the next chapters, the MST and EZLN have never made such a claim. This does not mean however, that the MST and EZLN ultimately have no effect or influence for other social movements around the world.

The next two chapters will expand on these two movements' foundation and history. Important events, turning points and cornerstones will be identified from the perspective of the movements' own members. Looking at these movements' histories

from this particular perspective will help us understand and analyze whether they could ever trigger a possible revolution at a broader global level.

Chapter 3: A Quarter Century of EZLN Resistance, 1983 – 2007

EZLN and MST are two important social movements that provide influence and spirit to the broader resistance movements of the world under current neoliberal conditions. After ten years of preparation, the EZLN launched its struggle on the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force, the first day of 1994. Given that there was almost no resistance against the domination of neoliberal politics and ideology in Mexico at that time, the rise of the EZLN and its influence was very significant. The EZLN, with its successes and all of its pitfalls, shows that resistance is possible under any conditions. On the other hand, the MST, from the beginning of the 1980s, established a new movement and reached out to more than one million participants in just a few decades. The rapid establishment of the movement and its organization and experiences during and after the land occupations made the MST exemplary for other resistance movements in the world.

The purpose of this and the next chapter is to show what these movements have accomplished in the past quarter century. They opposed neoliberalism and anti-democratic governments in their countries, aiming to fulfill the urgent needs of their people. They obtained help from religious institutions and clergy. While religion has acted with the hegemony to stop the people's movements in many other parts of the world, it helped significantly in Brazil and Mexico. Most of these effects have been analyzed in the previous chapter. Here, under the light of that information, we will see the process of MST and EZLN development over the past quarter century. The significance of the organizations' democratic, non-hierarchical and participatory features will be outlined and the importance of their power practices in shaping their histories will be explained.

The MST and the EZLN are important not only because they started and continued their resistance under the siege of neoliberalism, but also because they created their movements by taking lessons from old movements and are thus not faced with the pitfalls of the past. One of their most important and distinctive characteristics was their

rejection of the Leninist type of hierarchical organization. Even under such difficult conditions, they did not change this fundamental organizational principle, democracy. They could have used old examples and repeated them, but they chose not to do this and instead created a new style of movement by listening to people and learning lessons from past experiences. “Democracy, equity and justice” became one of the slogans of the EZLN, which did not use it as merely a slogan but also applied it to the very organization of the movement. Leading by obeying principle and “Good Government Juntas” are examples of the application of these principles. Similar experiences by different names can also be seen in the MST. Rotation among the leadership and organizational staff is one such example. The historical progress of these groups also gives important clues and direct signs of their uniqueness and importance among today’s social movements.

3.1. Contestation History of the EZLN

The first day of 1994 was the end of silence. From that point on, people around the world would turn their heads toward Chiapas⁷⁴ and watch out what is happening there. On that day, a guerilla army that called itself the EZLN started an uprising in the Chiapas region of southeastern Mexico with the demand of democracy, freedom and justice for all Mexican citizens.⁷⁵ This armed uprising resulted in the occupation of seven Chiapas settlements, Lacandon Forest, San Cristobal de Las Casas, Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Chanal, Oxchuc and Huixtan. This was the official start of the

⁷⁴ “Chiapas is the southernmost state of Mexico, located towards the southeast of the country... The state capital city is Tuxtla Gutiérrez; other cities and towns in Chiapas include San Cristóbal de las Casas, Comitán, and Tapachula. Chiapas is also home to the ancient Maya ruins of Palenque, Yaxchilan, Bonampak, Chinkultic, and Tonina. Most people in Chiapas are poor, rural small farmers. About one quarter of the population are of full or predominant Maya descent, and in rural areas many do not speak Spanish. The state suffers from the highest rate of malnutrition in Mexico, estimated to affect over 40% of the population” (“Chiapas,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiapas>, Accessed 5 October 2007.).

⁷⁵ Özgür Orhangazi, “EZLN Ayaklanmasının Kısa Tarihi,” in Sibel Özbudun and Temel Demirer, eds., *Mayaların Dönüşü* (İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar, 1998), 74.

EZLN's resistance and struggle. Before examining the uprising further, one other important point must be made about the date chosen for its start. The first day of January 1994 was also the day that the NAFTA came into force, signed by Canada, the US and Mexico. Newspapers, television channels and other media branches followed the important agreement closely, while the EZLN used both the event and the media for its own advantages. From the beginning, the EZLN was aware of the importance of communication and new technologies. People were well-informed about the uprising from the beginning; in this way, the EZLN used propaganda weapon efficiently. The EZLN knowingly took the risk of the state and government undermining the movement by choosing to use media widely.

3.2. Preparation for Resistance and Struggle

How could such an armed uprising appear in Mexico? The EZLN had prepared for ten years; however, no one had heard anything about them during their preparations. With great silence, they prepared themselves for struggle and began on a very symbolic day. What were they doing in their preparation period, between 1983 and 1993? The start of it all was quite familiar, a classical Latin American guerrilla approach to a struggle with aim of revolution. The *Fuerzas de Liberacion Nacional* (National Forces of Liberation, or FLN)⁷⁶ can be regarded as the embryo of today's EZLN.⁷⁷ The FLN was the one of the first groups that came to Chiapas to create a guerrilla movement. Its founders drew their initial inspiration and ideology from the revolutions in Cuba and

⁷⁶ "The FLN had been founded by students August 6, 1969, in Monterrey, in northern Mexico. Most of its early members had been killed by police and army units during a first attempt to build up a guerilla movement in Chiapas. Only in the early 1980s did the group manage to establish contacts with local *campesino* organizations and thereby create a base for the construction of the EZLN" (Carlos Tello Diaz, as quoted in Niels Barmeyer, "The Guerrilla Movement as a Project An Assessment of Community Involvement in the EZLN," *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 128, Vol. 30 no. 1 (January 2003), 137.).

⁷⁷ Niels Barmeyer, "The Guerrilla Movement as a Project An Assessment of Community Involvement in the EZLN," *Latin American Perspectives* Issue 128, Vol. 30 no. 1 (January 2003), 124.

Nicaragua and various Latin American liberation movements, as well as from Maoist forms of popular organization.⁷⁸

However, the path they followed after this initial beginning made them unique. In the classical pattern, guerrillas came from cities and organized the natives and peasants. In this form, the right to command is absolutely the right of the urban guerrillas, not the right of the natives or the people for whom they are struggling. However, the EZLN did not do this. The EZLN created a combination-style of leadership and its success depends very much on this combination. The EZLN feeds itself from two sources. The first is the armed political organization that was established by middle-class activists from urban areas, including students and professors. The second is the native resistance organization that struggles in the mountains.⁷⁹ They soon learned, however, that the movement's survival and success depended on adapting to local forms of organization and decision-making.⁸⁰ Previously, no clear examples of such a tactic existed. Intellectuals and guerrillas had generally taken the leadership role and tried to shape and conduct the behaviors of the people. The EZLN acted in contrast to this pattern. The most famous figure of the EZLN is Subcomandante⁸¹ Marcos. The understanding here is that there can be only one true commander: the people themselves. There is not one central leader; representatives are chosen from native society and their consciousness of collective leadership resists any kind of leadership cult.⁸² Because they see the danger hidden in this issue of "leadership," they developed a further tactic against it. All of the guerrillas in the EZLN wear ski-masks. The subcomandantes and guerrillas hide their real faces in order to communicate to the people that "we are all the same." Death or betrayal of any individual inside the EZLN will not destroy the

⁷⁸ Barmeyer, 124.

⁷⁹ Temel Demirer and Özgür Orhangazi, "Yoksulluk ve Başkaldırıların Meksika'sı," in Sibel Özbudun and Temel Demirer, eds., *Mayaların Dönüşü* (İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar, 1998), 31.

⁸⁰ Barmeyer, 124.

⁸¹ This title means "vice-commander" or "sub-assistant."

⁸² Gustavo Esteva, "Meksika Yerlileri Kalkınmaya Hayır Diyor," in Özbudun and Demirer, 117.

movement because leadership and continuity is not dependent on any specific person, but is rather linked to all the people in the resistance.

While this understanding of leadership has its pitfall, it has to be applied because the struggle is for people and they have to be in decision. Its pitfall is the risk of people giving wrong decision or correct decision in wrong time. Many join in decision making process despite one leader and this can longer the process. Also, system did not give education to people to lead but give education to obey. So, it is clear that in the beginning, things will not be efficient but this does not change what is correct for people in the understanding of ELZN. EZLN act according to what they see as correct. As a result, while criticizing their leadership understanding, this idea needs to keep in mind.

Between 1983 and 1993, the EZLN organized itself and deepened its roots in Chiapas, step by step. Over the years, the group slowly grew, building on social relations among the indigenous base and making use of an organizational infrastructure created by peasant organizations and the Catholic Church.⁸³ The conditions in Chiapas⁸⁴, the isolation and ignorance of Mayan natives and the economic, political and cultural oppression from landowners and the state created a firm foundation for the uprising. In 1983, 17 November was the beginning of a new life for the people of Chiapas and of the EZLN. Guerrillas established the first camp, *La Pesadilla*, “Nightmare.” Six people were stationed there: five men and one woman; three mestizos and three natives. Then the guerrillas tried to establish additional camps, secure food and water, study the

⁸³ “Zapatista Army of National Liberation,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezln#Brief_history, Accessed 9 October 2007.

⁸⁴ A mere 1% of Chiapis’ population controls half of the land. Only 18.4% of peasants have water access and only 2% of peasants have electricity in their homes. Thirty percent of Chiapas’ population comes from 10 different Mayan tribes. Seventy-five percent of the population lives in 16,422 regions which have fewer than 100 people. In 1989, only half of the profit from Chiapas’ financial sector returned to the region as investment or credit. Twenty percent of the Mexican electricity need is satisfied by Chiapas, but two-thirds of the area’s populace has no electricity themselves and only 2% of the peasants have electricity. Among children, 72% go to school for only one year. As much as 80% of the population suffers from malnutrition. Roughly 1.5 million people are unable to access basic health services. There are 0.2 hospital rooms per 1,000 people, 1 surgeon per 100,000 people, 1 doctor per 2,000 people and 1 nurse per 2,500 people. These are the conditions of Chiapas (Fikret Başkaya, Temel Demirer and Sibel Özbudun, *Dünyanın Balkonundaki İsyançılar Zapatistalar “YDD”*, *Enternasyonalizm* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1998), 188.).

politics and culture of Mexico and prepare for armed struggle. In time, the *El Fogon* (Stove), *Reclutas* (Clumsy), Baby Doc, *De la Juventud* (Youth) and Watapil camps were established. The guerrillas gradually began to communicate with villages in the region. First they talked to one person, and then he or she would talk to his or her own family. This chain of communication continued from family to village, then village to region. Thus, their existence became a secret that was carried by local voices, a mass plot against the government.⁸⁵ However, as was argued above, the EZLN did not transform the people and the region, but rather the EZLN transformed itself into a new shape. The EZLN was influenced by all people and their experiences. There was a transformation, not just on one side, but all together. Both sides learned from each other. Experiences and knowledge were shared. This is the basic characteristic of today's EZLN.

3.3. Start of Armed Struggle and First Steps: 1994-96

Ten years of preparation helped the EZLN to enlarge, solve problems and defend itself from the enemy. At the end of this period, the people, not the leaders, discussed and reached the conclusion that they had only military methods open to them for achieving their goals. The date for the armed uprising was strategically decided as 1 January 1994, the founding date of NAFTA. With the attack of 1 January 1994, the EZLN achieved great political and military success by invading seven settlements of Chiapas.⁸⁶ This first armed conflict continued for nearly two weeks and resulted in hundreds of deaths. Because of societal pressure and the EZLN's acceptance, the federal declaration of ceasefire ended armed conflict on 12 January 1994. On the first day of the conflict, the EZLN published the First Declaration of Lacandon Jungle. This declaration clearly showed why they were there, what they wanted and their determination to persevere:

⁸⁵ Gloria Munoz Ramirez, trans. İlker Özünlü, *Ateş ve Söz* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2005), 18.

⁸⁶ Ramirez, 111.

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us... But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation... Our struggle follows the constitution which is held high by its call for justice and equality... To the People of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our people for many years. Therefore we ask for your participation, your decision to support this plan that struggles for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic.⁸⁷

After the ceasefire, a dialogue began between the federal government and the EZLN, with the purpose of finding a just and dignified political outcome appropriate to the conflict.⁸⁸ In February, the bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz, mediated the negotiations. From that moment on, he filled the roll of mediator in several attempts to obtain a pacific resolution to the conflict between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government.⁸⁹ Negotiations continued from 21 February to 2 March. The EZLN declared that they would discuss the government's thirty-four-articled mediatory document. After that, the EZLN started a lengthy discussion on the documents among its own members and with other parts of society. On 12 June 1994, the Second Declaration of Lacandon Jungle was published and the government's proposal to end the conflict

⁸⁷ "First Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/1994/199312xx.en.htm>, Accessed 10 October 2007.

⁸⁸ "Towards a history of events in Chiapas," <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ralertdx.html>, Accessed 11 October 2007.

⁸⁹ "Cerca de 300 líderes religiosos internacionales rinden homenaje al obispo Samuel Ruiz y a la diócesis de San Cristobal de las Casas," http://www.sipaz.org/documentos/taticnov99/tatic99_esp.htm, Accessed 11 October 2007.

was rejected by a ratio of 97.88%.⁹⁰ The Second Declaration of Lacandon Jungle and the style of the rejection of the government's proposal clearly showed the importance of democracy and civil society in the EZLN's acts. Previously, decisions were made by small groups within organizations and consulting with the greater society was out of the question. However, the EZLN showed the importance it placed on democracy and the people from the beginning. These ideas are discussed in key EZLN documents:

...But this nightmare only lasted 12 days, as another force, superior to any political or military power, imposed itself upon the conflicting sides. Civil Society assumed the duty of preserving our country; it demonstrated its disagreement with the massacre and obliged a dialogue...Our sovereignty resides in CIVIL SOCIETY. It is the people who can, at any time, alter or modify our form of government, and who have already assumed this responsibility...Whether by suicide or by firing squad, the death of the current Mexican political system is a necessary, although insufficient, condition for the transition to democracy in our country. There is no solution to the problems of Chiapas separate from a solution to the problems in Mexico...We are not proposing a new world, but rather a much earlier stage: the entryway to the new Mexico. In this sense, this revolution will not conclude in a new class, fraction of class or group in power, but rather in a free and democratic "space" of political struggle...we call for a Democratic National Convention, supreme and revolutionary, from which must emerge the proposals for a transitional government and a new national law, a new Constitution that guarantees the legal implementation of the popular will...⁹¹

It is easy to see the signs of the EZLN's uniqueness in its documents and declarations. After twelve days of armed struggle, the EZLN saw its real power, the power of civil society. In all these years, the EZLN has never ceased believing in and cooperating with civil society. The EZLN did not merely show the way, expecting society to follow. Rather, the EZLN and society have been walking the path together. There is no place for vanguards in this struggle. Cooperation and discussion, asking questions and walking together, have shaped the way in this struggle. The call for

⁹⁰ Özgür Orhangazi, *EZLN Ayaklanmasının Kısa Tarihi*, 75.

⁹¹ "Second Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/1994/19940610.en.htm>, Accessed on 13 October 2007.

democracy can be heard often in the EZLN's rhetoric. Democracy was generally an issue to be dealt with after the revolution in classical leftist movements. It was long argued that democratic processes can harm the movement or slow down progress. However, the EZLN declared that democracy is an urgent need and will open the way for all other changes. As a result, the EZLN organized *Convencion Nacional Democratica* (the National Democratic Congress, or CND) in Chiapas between 5 August and 9 August, 1994. Seven thousand Mexicans came together in response to the EZLN's invitation. This was the first, but not the last, political and cultural meeting organized by the EZLN. The aim of this meeting was to find a way to peacefully achieve and maintain democracy. This emphasis on civil society and democracy makes the EZLN truly stand apart from other social movements.

...The EZLN pledged its word and its effort, then, to seeking a peaceful transition to democracy. In the National Democratic Convention the EZLN sought a civic and peaceful force...We Zapatistas are willing to give up the only thing we have, life, to demand democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans...WE CALL UPON THE WORKERS OF THE REPUBLIC, THE WORKERS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE CITIES, THE NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS, THE TEACHERS AND THE STUDENTS OF MEXICO, THE WOMEN OF MEXICO, THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY, THE HONEST ARTISTS AND INTELLECTUALS, THE RESPONSIBLE RELIGIOUS MEMBERS, THE COMMUNITY- BASED MILITANTS OF THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, to take up the means and forms of struggle that they consider possible and necessary, to struggle for the end of the Party-State system, incorporating themselves into the NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION if they do not belong to a party, and to the National Liberation Movement if they are active in any of the political opposition forces...⁹²

The EZLN published its Third Declaration of Lacandon Jungle at the beginning of 1995. The main point of this declaration was to establish *Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional* (the National Liberation Movement, or MLN). This movement aimed to gather

⁹² "Third Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/1995/199501xx.en.htm>, Accessed 15 October 2007.

all parts of society together during the transition of the political system to democracy, to formulate a new Magna Carta upon which everyone agreed. The year continued with negotiations between the government and the EZLN. However, they could not reach a definite agreement. In the second half of the year, the EZLN declared that they would discuss their demands with the people and hold a referendum. More than one and half million people joined this referendum and discussion, and most of them accepted the demands of the EZLN for increased democracy in Mexico.⁹³

3.4. National and International Solidarity: 1996

The things accomplished by the EZLN in 1996 established its fame all over the world. First, they called a meeting of what might be considered the new version of the Communist International, with workers, socialists, communists and many different social groups' members. The EZLN created this new meeting for resisting people, movements and organizations from different countries. They announced this plan in the Fourth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle:

The massive participation of international civil society called attention to the necessity to construct those spaces where the different aspirations for democratic change could find expression even among the different countries. The EZLN considers the results of this national and international dialogue very serious and will now begin the political and organizational work necessary in order to comply with those messages...⁹⁴

The meeting was held between 27 July and 3 August, called the International of Hope⁹⁵ or the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ramirez, 143.

⁹⁴ "Fourth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fourth_Declaration_of_the_Lacandon_Jungle, Accessed 16 October 2007.

⁹⁵ Başkaya, Demirer and Özbudun, *Dünyanın Balkonundaki İsyancılar Zapatistalar...*

More than 5,000 people from 42 different countries joined the five different *Aguascalientes*⁹⁷ that met in Oventik, La Realidad, La Garrucha, Morelia and Roberto Barrios.⁹⁸ In each of these settlements, a table was established and one topic was discussed. The names of tables were “The politics we have and the politics we need,” “The economic question: Horror stories,” “All cultures for everyone. The media: From graffiti to cyberspace,” “What society if not civil?” and “Many worlds will fit in this world.”⁹⁹ Thousands of people came together and shared their experiences, struggles and ideas on resistance against neoliberalism. The EZLN listened to everyone and explained their ideas to people from different parts of the world. Until that time, movements had always claimed that their way was the only one. As a result, they tried to force others to accept them as the vanguard and follow them blindly. The EZLN, however, declared that it was ready to listen to everyone and learn from them and their experiences.

At the same time, *Frente Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (the Zapatista Front of National Liberation, or FZLN) was established. It was described in the Fourth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle as follows:

ZAPATISTA FRONT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION[:] a civil and nonviolent organization, independent and democratic, Mexican and

⁹⁶ “Zapatista Army of National Liberation,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zapatista_Army_of_National_Liberation#Detailed_History, Accessed 16 October 2007.

⁹⁷ “The ‘Aguascalientes’ is the meeting point between the so-called civil society and the EZLN. Del Aguascalientes are not owners or civil society, nor the EZLN, to be given this meeting between civil society and the EZLN, conforms a new community mixed with their customs and laws which sends obeying the new community is this mixture. Of those who live there... His name is because during the Mexican Revolution (1910), Emiliano Zapata, and other leaders of the revolution, met in the city of Aguascalientes-México, in order to pacify the country, because at that time the various revolutionary flows were facing between them... In the State of Chiapas, in south-eastern Mexico, there since 1994, five Aguascalientes, the first one was created in an area called Selva Lacandona, Reality (which is the place where the natives inhabiting Lacandones, and that again the place where presumably is the commander of the EZLN, with Marcos at the helm” (<http://www.geocities.com/aguascalientes2/aguascalientes.htm>, Accessed 16 October 2007.).

⁹⁸ Ramirez, 162.

⁹⁹ Andrew Flood, “A Report on the 1st Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism,” http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/andrew/encounter1_report.html, Accessed 16 October 2007.

national, which struggles for democracy, liberty, and justice in Mexico...A political force which struggles against the State-Party System. A political force which struggles for a new constituency and a new constitution. A political force which does not struggle to take political power but for a democracy where those who govern, govern by obeying...¹⁰⁰

The National Democratic Congress, National Liberation Movement and Zapatista Front of National Liberation were all significant EZLN efforts to establish a bridge with society, to walk together on the path of building democracy. The EZLN has always emphasized the power of people and the desire for democracy. This emphasis was put into practice with the FZLN. This new organization would be built from the ground up by citizens committed to carrying out Zapatista political principles such as *mandar obedeciendo*,¹⁰¹ or “rule by obeying.” Instead of being a vanguard, the FZLN was to become the collector and organizer of the people’s proposals.¹⁰² The aim of the FZLN was to collect people’s proposals and create a new political space in which to discuss them. The FZLN was also important because it generated interaction between ordinary people and Zapatistas. One of the most basic features of the EZLN, listening and walking the path together, thus came to light again.

In the same year, the EZLN chose silence as its weapon after the government failed to act upon the San Andres Accords. These accords hold special importance because they first enabled the EZLN to meet the people and listen to them, and also first allowed the EZLN to be recognized by the government. Before continuing with the history of the EZLN, it is worthwhile to pause and briefly consider the San Andres Accords.

¹⁰⁰ “Fourth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle,” http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fourth_Declaration_of_the_Lacandon_Jungle, Accessed 16 October 2007.

¹⁰¹ The National Indigenous Congress describes the guiding principles of this power as: “to serve, not be served; to represent, not supplant; to build, not destroy; to propose, not impose; to convince, not defeat; to come down, not climb up” (Laura Carlsen, “An Uprising Against the Inevitable,” *Americas Program*, <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/3217>, Accessed 20 October 2007.).

¹⁰² Kara Ann Zugman, “Zapatismo and Urban Political Practice,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 143, Vol. 32 no. 4 (July 2005), 133.

These initial accords were the direct result of the dialogue process between the Mexican Federal Government and the EZLN, specifically the talks that began in January of 1996 to address the subject of indigenous rights and culture.¹⁰³ The dialogue process, signing of accords, struggle for fulfilments of the issues addressed and many other related aspects of the San Andres Accords let the EZLN meet with other parts of society, listen and talk to them and draw the road-map for the continuation of its struggle.

The dialogue process began in January of 1994 and on 16 February 1996, the EZLN agreed upon and signed the first phase of the San Andres Accords.¹⁰⁴ However, it would not be possible to see fulfillment of the San Andres Accords¹⁰⁵ by the government. Dialogues thus stopped. The EZLN minted five new conditions for continuation of the process. The Commission of Concordia and Pacification (COCOPA) presented new terms. The EZLN accepted and signed them during November of 1996. However, the state did not respond to this by accepting and fulfilling its conditions. The state and the PRI government completely altered the terms of the agreement. The Zapatistas and others involved in the drafting of the accords expected that the executive branch and Congress would sign the agreement into law. Instead, the government did nothing. All of 1996 passed, until December, when the Zedillo administration issued its own counter-proposal for constitutional reform, thereby effectively rejecting the proposal for constitutional reform that was based on the San Andres Accords.¹⁰⁶ As Bishop Samuel Ruiz said "...the government put 27 conditions, 27 modifications (into the COCOPA proposal) that weren't so much editing, but actual changes in the content..."¹⁰⁷ After the PRI government changed the agreement, the legislative power

¹⁰³ "The San Andres Accords: The History and Importance of the San Andres Accords," <http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/americas/mexico/SanAndres.html>, Accessed 7 December 2007.

¹⁰⁴ "The San Andres Accords: The History and Importance of the San Andres Accords."

¹⁰⁵ The text of the San Andres Agreements can be viewed at http://www.usip.org/library/pa/chiapas/pa_chiapas.html.

¹⁰⁶ "Indigenous Autonomy and the Public Interest: Constructing Citizens, Rights, and the Nation in Mexico," AAA Panel: Public and Public Interest Anthropology (New Orleans, 2002), <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/CPIA/PAPERS/newling.aaa.2002.pdf>, Accessed 23 January 2008.

¹⁰⁷ "The San Andres Accords: The History and Importance of the San Andres Accords."

and the high court approved the state's decision. In March of 1998, Mexico's "New Strategy for Peace" Interior Minister Francisco Labastida announced a so-called new strategy and said that the Mexican government would unilaterally introduce a new initiative on indigenous rights and culture to Congress for approval, without regard for the position of the EZLN, the National Intermediation Commission (CONAI) or the COCOPA. President Fox then handed the reforms over to Congress with a series of secret commentaries that would modify the COCOPA proposal significantly in December 2000. Congress passed the bill in April of 2001. At that point, the Zapatistas broke off negotiations. At the end, the Supreme Court approved the bill accepted by the government and refused the Zapatista rejections of that bill in September 2002.¹⁰⁸

Despite the failure of the San Andres Accords to transform into law, the ongoing process is nevertheless important in understanding the EZLN. The negotiations and dialogues between the EZLN and the government clearly showed people more about the EZLN and let local people make educated decisions about participating in the movement. The EZLN continued to meet people throughout this process, listen to their problems and struggles and explain the struggles and aims of the EZLN. As a result, the EZLN reshaped itself in a more democratic fashion. It transformed from a classical guerrilla movement into a more democratic organization. It became a movement in which people represent themselves and a movement that actively listens to other ideas and other people. Support and recognition from people from all over the world was a major result of this transformation.

As was stated above, the EZLN used silence as its weapon against the failure of the San Andres Accords. Months passed before the EZLN declared the purpose of its silence as a desire to create an opportunity to look at themselves, replant their own grain, make their voices and hearths more powerful and find places to develop them.¹⁰⁹ During these months, the military and political pressure against and abuse of the Zapatistas continued. The federal government and the army tried to surround the EZLN and cut

¹⁰⁸ [http://www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/3CF5F6B4F18515F7802570B8005AAD13?OpenDocument](http://www.internaldisplacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/3CF5F6B4F18515F7802570B8005AAD13?OpenDocument), Accessed 3 May 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Ramirez, 180.

their contact with outside people and other movements. Against this action, the EZLN decided to march to Mexico City with 1,111 people. During the march, the EZLN explained the conditions in Chiapas, the failure of the San Andres Accords and their own resistance. Meanwhile, the group also listened to other stories of other people's resistance and problems and asked for people's opinions about what to do next. It is important to emphasize the symbolism of this march, because it showed that the EZLN was ready to listen to others' struggles and advice. This feature of classical movements repeated itself time and time again, and it is important to recognize how the EZLN avoided it.

3.5. More Democracy and Cooperation: 1997 – 1999

As years passed, the EZLN continued to listen to and talk with people and never compromised its principles, despite military suppression, massacres and imprisonment of many EZLN sympathizers and supporters. It participated in many conferences and forums, including the 1994 Cathedral Dialog, the National Democratic Convention, the 1995 San Andres Meetings and National and International Consultation for Peace, the 1996 establishment conferences of the FZLN, the National Indigenous Congress, the signing of the first agreements with the federal government, the Continental Meeting, the National State Reform Forum, the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, the COCOPA-EZLN-CONAI triple meetings and the 1997 march of 1,111 natives to the capitol city.¹¹⁰ At the beginning of 1998, military attacks, murders, arrests and prosecutions were continuing and the EZLN again responded with the weapon of silence. Though the state was determined to use armed repression, the EZLN was determined to reply with peaceful resistance actions. At last, the group broke its silence with the Fifth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle:

...Time and again, ever since we first saw and spoke with all of you,
we have insisted on dialogue and encounter as the path upon which we

¹¹⁰ Ramirez, 194.

should walk...As before, today we continue walking together with all the Indian peoples in the struggle for the recognition of their rights. Not as the vanguard or as a leader, only as a part...While the government piled up hollow words and hastened to argue with a rival that constantly slipped away, the Zapatistas made a weapon of struggle out of silence...As part of this struggle which we call for in this *Fifth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle* for the recognition of indigenous rights and an end to the war, reaffirming our "For everyone, everything, nothing for ourselves," the ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION announces that it will carry out, directly and in all of Mexico, a...**NATIONAL CONSULTATION CONCERNING THE LEGAL INITIATIVE ON INDIGENOUS RIGHTS OF THE COMMISSION ON CONCORDANCE AND PACIFICATION AND FOR AN END TO THE WAR OF EXTERMINATION.**¹¹¹

The EZLN issued an invitation to a meeting for civil society representatives to improve national consultation. Between 20 November and 22 November, 32 Zapatista delegates and more than 3,000 representatives of civil society came together and set the date and content of the upcoming national consultation. As the EZLN claimed in the Fifth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle, it was strong-willed to walk this way and resist together with all who wanted to join them.

The EZLN had shaped a new style of politics. While resisting contemporary politics, the group listened to people and enlarged its circle of discussion, into which everyone could enter. Five thousand people left their home communities and dispersed to every part of Mexico. The national consultation actualized on 21 March 1999, with 1,299 municipalities visited nationwide. Consultations were also made outside of Mexico. Nearly 3,000,000 people participated, and the majority of them said "yes" to the rights of indigenous societies and "no" to war.

¹¹¹ "Fifth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/1998/19980700.en.htm>, Accessed 18 October 2007.

3.6. Elections and a New Government, 2000 – 2002

Mexico's 2000 presidential election drew all popular and media attention toward itself. However, the EZLN was aware that a change of president would not matter. The problem, rather, lay deeper than that; the problem was the system. For this reason, the EZLN again fell silent in protest. In the first months of 2000, the group sent greeting letters to intellectuals and supporters for special occasions such as World Women's Day. The EZLN specified that election times are not times of the EZLN, because it prefers to develop entirely new politics. The EZLN did not attempt to block the voting process in Chiapas but also did not support any of the parties.¹¹² The result of the election was an end of the one-party period. PRI relinquished power to Vicente Fox's PAN. The EZLN held a press conference on 2 December of that year and declared that they were neutral to the new president; his upcoming decisions would determine the group's position toward his presidency. In a second bulletin, they explained the conditions that were needed to start dialogue again. The first condition was parliamentary acceptance of the resolution that had been prepared by COCOPA. The second was the release of all Zapatista prisoners and the closure of six military stations. In a third bulletin, they announced the march of a delegation to Mexico City for the Indigenous Rights and Cultures resolution. The final bulletin greeted the new peace emissary, Luis H. Alvarez, and promised that, once they saw signs of progress toward their conditions, they would start a dialogue with him.¹¹³

The beginning of the seventh year brought new hope for peace. The new government claimed that it wanted negotiation and a peaceful resolution to the disagreements with the EZLN. Though the EZLN had its doubts about this statement, the group nevertheless continued to be optimistic. The EZLN is always aware of the importance of communication with national and international civil society. A movement

¹¹² Ramirez, 233.

¹¹³ Alvarez, 237-239.

disconnected from society would almost certainly lose the struggle from the very beginning. Because of this, the EZLN established the *Centro de Informacion Zapatista* (the Zapatista Information Center, or CIZ). The CIZ will ensure stable communication and linkage between the EZLN and the wider society. The march to Mexico City that was declared at the end of 2000 began on 24 February 2001. The delegation consisted of 23 comandantes and 1 subcomandante.¹¹⁴ The first stop was San Cristobal de las Casas. Thousands of people came together to listen to the comandantes and make a great demonstration. This was also sign of what was to come along the rest of the journey.

During the march, they stopped in many settlements and had chances to talk with many people. The EZLN members explained why they were there, what they wanted and what their goals were. This march was also another example of the linkages between the EZLN and the people. The third CNI was held in Purepecha of Nurio on 3 and 4 March, where representatives of 40 different native societies discussed and declared their demands. These demands were mainly about constitutional rights of indigenous people, recognition of their land rights and normative rules, and also the removal of the military from their lands. After a 15-day journey in which they visited 15 states with millions of people escorting them, hundreds of declarations were published.¹¹⁵ The highlight of the entire journey was probably Comandante Esther's speech to the parliament. The fact that the speech was made not by Marcos but by Esther is important. It was a surprise not only nationally, but also to international civil society. Esther heavily focused on the marginalization of the poor, natives and women.¹¹⁶ It was important because the EZLN has always accepted and respected the norms and rules of the indigenous. However, similar respect for women has not been accepted in every

¹¹⁴ Alvarez, 248.

¹¹⁵ Alvarez, 255-260.

¹¹⁶ Alvarez, 265.

area. The EZLN thus showed that its members were ready to change erroneous views about the place of women in society with the EZLN's Women Revolutionary Law.¹¹⁷

Despite Fox's claim that he could solve the Chiapas problem in 15 minutes, the issue remained totally unresolved four months later. The government started to discuss a new proposal that had no relation to the San Andres accords and the expectations of the people.¹¹⁸ Although there was great popular opposition to this proposal, it was accepted at every step of the state and federal government.

The objection of the EZLN and native societies to this new proposal was in turn rejected by the National High Justice Court (SCJN) on 6 September 2002.¹¹⁹ This rejection proved that the more settled instruments of the state will do nothing about the rights or problems of indigenous people. The EZLN, with the support of society, struggles for these rights and resists the suppression of the government and the army. The decision of the SCJN was protested by intellectuals, artists, writers and ordinary people.

¹¹⁷ This law is stated in ten points. "**First:** Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine. **Second:** Women have the right to work and receive a just salary. **Third:** Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for. **Fourth:** Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are free and democratically elected. **Fifth:** Women and their children have the right to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition. **Sixth:** Women have the right to education. **Seventh:** Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage. **Eighth:** Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished. **Ninth:** Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces. **Tenth:** Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations give" ("EZLN: Women's Revolutionary Law, <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/womlaw.html>, Accessed 19 October 2007.).

¹¹⁸ Alvarez, 266-268.

¹¹⁹ Alvarez, 282.

3.7. Autonomous Municipalities and Good Government Juntas: 2003 – 2004

Another important phenomenon during this time was the rising of autonomous municipalities. Their number was increasing, and more importantly, they were beginning to influence more areas of life. The significance of the autonomous municipalities was deepening. In the coming years, we will see the shaping of a new life around these autonomous municipalities, counteracting the power of the state.

The beginning of the ninth year of the EZLN's struggle was celebrated by a demonstration in San Cristobal de las Casas. During it, comandantes and subcomandantes made speeches. These speeches explained what had happened in the prior nine years and what was expected to happen next. Comandante Tacho said that, despite all the acts of the government, the Zapatistas continued on their way with the consciousness that they had not forgotten or "sold" themselves. Comandante Fidelia emphasized the issue of women. Comandante Brus Li gave a speech about autonomous municipalities. Subcomandante Marcos made a challenging speech in which he said that the Zapatista struggle was bound to honor law. Respect of civilian life, avoidance of crime and nonviolence all fell within this law.¹²⁰ The points emphasized by EZLN comandantes and the subcomandante demonstrated again how the EZLN had evolved differently than other activist movements.

The EZLN always responded to international events and was always aware of the relation of its struggle to international politics and resistance. Their invitation to resist and protest the wars in Iraq and in Chiapas was a classical example of this pattern.

The year 2003 was an important turning point for the EZLN, which declared the end of the *Aguascalientes*. The reasons for this decision were explained in the "Treceava Estela"¹²¹ as follows:

¹²⁰ Alvarez, 300-304.

¹²¹ The translation of document also can be find in <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/10094> accessed 14 August 2008

...keeps an example of 'humanitarian aid' for indigenous people in Chiapas, where a few weeks ago: a needle-heel shoe, pink, import numbers 6 and half without their pair ...These good people who, frankly, we send a slipper pink, needle-heel from 6 and 1 / 2, imported, without their pair ... thinking that, poor as we are, we accept anything, charity and alms...It is the practice that some NGOs and international agencies. It consists, broadly, they decide what they need and communities, even without consultation, impose not only specific projects, including the times and ways of its realization. Imagine the desperation of a community that needs drinking water and to which he endilgan a library, which requires a school for children and give a course of herbolaria...¹²²

The *Aguascalientes* had finished their missions. After that, the autonomous municipalities seized the flag and carried the Zapatistas forward. In the fifth part of the Treceava Estela, the EZLN explained the prior development of autonomous municipalities. The EZLN accepted that the municipalities were not perfect and had flaws. However, without compromising their principles such as "rule by obeying," the autonomous municipalities could be viewed as new forms of a different power. The sixth part of the Treceava Estela declared the establishment of the Good Government Juntas. Good Government Juntas were explained in this document as follows:

...The following will continue to be the exclusive government functions of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities: the provision of justice; community health; education; housing; land; work; food; commerce; information and culture, and local movement. The Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee in each region will monitor the operations of the Good Government Juntas in order to prevent acts of corruption, intolerance, injustice and deviation from the Zapatista principle of 'Governing Obeying' ...¹²³

Establishment of Good Government Juntas was celebrated on 9 August 2003 with the joining of 10,000 people. Autonomous municipalities and the Good

¹²² <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2003/200307-treceavaestelab.es.htm>, Accessed 25 October 2007.

¹²³ "A Good Government," <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2003/marcos/governmentJULY.html>, Accessed 25 October 2007.

Government Juntas became the main impulses of the Zapatista movement. Autonomy did have some pitfalls, including the risk of autonomy fetishism, the limits of territorially based autonomy, autonomy and curtailment of resource allocations and the neoliberal multiculturalism trap.¹²⁴ Good Government Juntas also carried the risks of direct democracy and non-existing leadership. Nonetheless, autonomy and juntas are two clear examples of what can be done today to resist neoliberalism. The practices of autonomous municipalities in the realms of education, health, jurisdiction and military open the way for another discussion about being power without taking power. The EZLN never targeted the government and its power. They refused the classical two-step strategy in which the first aim is to take power and the second is to change the world.¹²⁵ From the beginning, the EZLN aimed for new politics and a new world, opposed to neoliberalism and its effects. The practices of autonomous municipalities in the area of education and in the creation of a new political arena will be discussed in the next section of this thesis.

¹²⁴ Richard Stahler-Sholk, "Resisting Neoliberal Homogenization: The Zapatista Autonomy Movement," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 153, Vol. 34 no.2 (March 2007), 50.

¹²⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, "New Revolts Against the System," *New Left Review* No.18 (November/December 2002), 30-33.

3.8. The Other Campaign: 2005 – 2006

The Other Campaign, *La Otra Campana*, was designed to link non-partisan, anti-capitalist national liberation struggles across the country.¹²⁶ It was based on the Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle. In the first part of this declaration, the EZLN explained itself as follows:

...the EZLN, were almost all only indigenous from here in Chiapas, but we did not want to struggle just for [our] own good, or just for the good of the indigenous of Chiapas, or just for the good of the Indian peoples of Mexico. We wanted to fight along with everyone who was humble and simple like ourselves and who was in great need and who suffered from exploitation and thievery by the rich and their bad governments here, in our Mexico, and in other countries in the world...¹²⁷

This first part of this declaration was also a brief history of the EZLN. Important events and turning points were briefly reviewed here. The second part of the declaration discussed the group's status at that point in time. The most important achievement of the EZLN thus far was the creation of the autonomous municipalities, despite their pitfalls and mistakes. The autonomous municipality is how the people are now organized in order to govern themselves. This method of autonomous government was not simply invented by the EZLN, but rather it comes from several centuries of indigenous resistance and from the Zapatistas' own experience.¹²⁸ However, the EZLN realized that municipalities could not reach the desirable level of military competence on their own.

¹²⁶ Mariana Mora, "Zapatista Anticapitalist Politics and the 'Other Campaign': Learning from the Struggle for Indigenous Rights and Autonomy," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 153, Vol. 34 no.2 (March 2007), 64.

¹²⁷ "Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/sexta1.en.htm>, Accessed 26 October 2007.

¹²⁸ "Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle," <http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/sexta1.en.htm>, Accessed 26 October 2007.

Thus, Good Government Juntas were developed to overcome this problem and the “rule by obeying” principle was applied. In the third part of the declaration, the group explained how it sees the world, capitalism and the neoliberal globalization process:

...We see that capitalism is the strongest right now. Capitalism is a social system...those who have money and things give the orders, and those who only have their ability to work obey...capitalism means that there a few who have great wealth...They obtained that wealth, rather, by exploiting the work of the many. So capitalism is based on the exploitation of the workers...now they are on a path which is called Neoliberal Globalization. This globalization means that they no longer control the workers in one or several countries, but the capitalists are trying to dominate everything all over the world...Then they respect nothing, and they meddle wherever they wish. As if they were conquering other countries. That is why we Zapatistas say that neoliberal globalization is a war of conquest of the entire world, a world war, a war being waged by capitalism for global domination...neoliberal globalization wants to destroy the nations of the world so that only one Nation or country remains, the country of money, of capital.¹²⁹

The EZLN thus explained what is occurring as a result of neoliberal globalization and capitalism. Mexico cannot be separated from this process, and the effects of neoliberal globalization can be seen there. However, Mexican men and women are organizing and struggling in resistance.¹³⁰ The group further explained how they met indigenous people and then workers, students and other parts of civil society, all of whom joined the resistance.

We see in general that in our country, which is called Mexico, there are many people who do not put up with things, who do not surrender, who do not sell out. Who are dignified? And that makes us very pleased and happy, because with all those people it's not going to be so easy for the neoliberals to win, and perhaps it will be possible to save

¹²⁹ “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle.”

¹³⁰ “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle.”

our Patria from the great thefts and destruction they are doing. And we think that perhaps our ‘we’ will include all those rebellions...¹³¹

In the last part of the declaration, the group explained that what it wants in the world is to tell all of those who are resisting and fighting in their own ways and in their own countries “that you are not alone, that we, the Zapatistas, even though we are very small, are supporting you, and we are going to look at how to help you in your struggles and to speak to you in order to learn, because what we have, in fact, learned is to learn.”¹³² The EZLN thus greeted everyone who resists against neoliberalism and struggles for a new and better world. Actually, the EZLN summarized its goal as: “The idea of resisting neoliberal globalization... and of making a country where there will be justice, democracy and liberty for everyone.”¹³³ The EZLN declared that it will forge new relationships of mutual respect and support with persons and organizations that are resisting neoliberalism and struggling for humanity. They will send material aid such as food and handicrafts to those brothers and sisters who are struggling all over the world. They thought, they said, that there must be other intercontinental encounters to be held.¹³⁴ In Mexico, they further continue to resist and to meet people to explain the EZLN and listen to new dialogue. The group promised that it would send a delegation to all countries to establish a National Campaign and build another way of doing politics. This campaign would be known as the “Other Campaign.”

The Zapatistas are attempting to reassert their own anti-capitalist roots in a “new way of doing politics.”¹³⁵ In this process, relations and links with civil society are important. EZLN practices such as the Other Campaign are designed to find ways to articulate their struggle and connect with other struggles in Mexico. The first assembly

¹³¹ “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle,”

¹³² “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle.”

¹³³ “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle.”

¹³⁴ “Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle.”

¹³⁵ Mora, 65.

of the Other Campaign was held between 16 and 18 September 2005, with more than 2,000 participants in attendance.¹³⁶ Before this, six preparation meetings were held on 2 August and 10 September.¹³⁷ The Other Campaign was the result of that planning, and the “Plan & Tentative Schedule for the Other Campaign Tour” was declared on 16 September. The tour began on 1 January, from San Cristobal de Las Casas, and ended 25 June, with the return to Chiapas and the wait for the next step. During the tour, 31 states, including Mexico City, were visited. The Sixth Commission, responsible for carrying out the national objectives of the Sixth Declaration and established purposely for the tour, was composed of fifteen indigenous EZLN comandantes and its iconic mestizo spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos.¹³⁸ All events, speeches, declarations and anything else about the Other Campaign were published in *La Jornada*.¹³⁹ Delegate Zero Marcos also spoke with many journalists, writers and intellectuals from Mexico and different parts of world. The Other Campaign kicked off on 1 January 2006, the 12th anniversary of the rebels' 1994 uprising. The rebels spent the first week of January building ties to struggling organizations in other regions of Chiapas, then moved on to Tabasco, the Yucatan, and Veracruz, before crossing the isthmus to Oaxaca, Mexico's state with the largest Indian population. But the Other Campaign, it was vowed, would not fold up its tents after the July 2006 presidential vote. Unlike the political parties, the Zapatistas have a longer-range political goal than merely taking power and organizing Mexico for

¹³⁶ Mora,66.

¹³⁷ “The Other Campaign,” <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/~hmcleave/TheOtherCampaign.html>, Accessed 30 October 2007.

¹³⁸ RJ Maccini, “From Below and to the Left...” *Left Turn* Issue 20 (May/June 2006).

¹³⁹ “*La Jornada* is one of Mexico City's leading daily newspapers. It was established in 1984 by Carlos Payán Velver. The current editor (*directora general*) is Carmen Lira Saade. *La Jornada* has presence in seven states of the Mexican Republic with local editions in Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, San Luis Potosí, Puebla and Veracruz (*La Jornada de Oriente*). It has approximately 287,000 readers in Mexico City and according to alexa.com it ranks as the most visited newspaper on the web in Mexico. *La Jornada* caters to center-left stances in Mexico City, criticizing the PAN and PRI administrations, including their economic policies. Its editorials are also sympathetic toward the Zapatista (EZLN) movement and the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party and have supported the recently legalized same-sex civil unions in Mexico City and the legalization of abortion”(“*La Jornada*,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Jornada, Accessed 30 October 2007.).

a new constitution. After evaluating the July election results, a second set of comandantes embarked from Chiapas in September 2006 and did not return until March 2007, at which point they planned to weigh the successes and failures of the Other Campaign.¹⁴⁰

3.9. The Struggle Continues: 2006 – 2007

The EZLN still continues its struggle. In late 2006 and early 2007, the Zapatistas, through Subcomandante Marcos, along with other indigenous people, announced the Intercontinental Indigenous Encounter. They invited indigenous people from North and South America and the world to gather between 11 and 14 October 2007, near Guaymas, Sonora. In the declaration for the Indigenous Intercontinental Conference, this date was designated because it represented "515 years since the invasion of ancient Indigenous territories and the onslaught of the war of conquest, spoils and capitalist exploitation."¹⁴¹ Additionally, the "First Encounter between the Zapatistas and the Peoples of the World" was held at the beginning of 2007. At 8AM, thousands of EZLN supporters and over 1,500 men and women from 40 countries around the world joined the two workgroups in which autonomous education, the development of educational curricula in resistance circles, the Zapatistas' health system and the challenges, obstacles, and small achievements of their work were being discussed.¹⁴² The "Second Encounter between the Zapatistas and the Peoples of the World" was held between 20 and 28 July. Health, education, organization of communities, collective work, the struggle of women,

¹⁴⁰ John Ross, "The Zapatista Challenge in Mexico's Presidential Election," *Counter Punch* (5-6 November 2005), <http://www.counterpunch.org/ross11052005.html>, Accessed 10 May 2008.

¹⁴¹ "Zapatista Army of National Liberation," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zapatista_Army_of_National_Liberation, Accessed 31 October 2007.

¹⁴² "First Encounter Between the Zapatistas and the Peoples of World," <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/01/359105.html>, Accessed 31 October 2007.

autonomy and good government experiences were discussed during the encounter.¹⁴³ The EZLN again consulted with civil society to decide on the best path for the group's future. The future of resistance and struggle is closely related to the feedback and support of civil society in Mexico and around the world.

3.10. Unique Characteristics of the EZLN from a Historical Perspective

EZLN resistance has continued for nearly a quarter century, if we include their ten-year period of preparation. From 1983 to 1993, the EZLN prepared for an armed struggle in Chiapas. This armed struggle started on 1 January 1994. However, the EZLN then recognized the real power, the power of people and civil society. From that point on, the EZLN continued along a new path. During this struggle, the EZLN occasionally used classical tactics of guerrilla and social movements, but above all, the actions of the EZLN clearly show the group's uniqueness. First, EZLN members demonstrate a constant respect for civil society and a readiness to listen to and act with other civic groups and individuals. After the twelve days of armed struggle in 1994, the EZLN accepted a ceasefire upon the demand of civil society and began exploring more peaceful ways to achieve its demands. The San Andres meetings and accords were held at the end of this period. During this process, the National Democratic Congress, the National Liberation Movement, the Continental Meeting, the National State Reform Forum, the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, the Zapatista Front of National Liberation, consultation and referendum for the rights of indigenous, the Zapatista Information Center, the Other Campaign and the First and Second Encounters between the Zapatistas and the Peoples of the World were all attempts to establish links between the EZLN and the people. The discussion, questions and answers that appeared in these meetings and organizations all shaped the strategy of the EZLN. The group claimed that if it was going to achieve its goals of democracy, justice and freedom, it would not be because the EZLN had led the way, but because it

¹⁴³ <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/internazional/770/>, Accessed 31 October 2007.

had walked the way together with the people. These meetings and organizations were also important because they joined the EZLN with international intellectuals and struggles. The 1996 Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism can be understood as the forerunner of the World Social Forum.

The EZLN has always fed from the experiences and struggles of indigenous people. However, the group did not blindly accept everything from indigenous culture. In particular, the patriarchal character of indigenous society was clearly denied. The Women's Revolutionary Law is evidence of this fact. Women's participation in the EZLN is at nearly 50% today. There are many women comandantes, such as Comandante Esther. Furthermore, only indigenous people can be comandantes; people from outside the native communities can become subcomandantes, like Marcos. This is a response to classical resistance movements' leadership. The EZLN argues that no one can come from outside and become a vanguard or single-handedly monopolize the group's salvation.

The EZLN quickly abandoned the traditional two-step strategy that aims to first seize power of the state and only then begin to "change the world." The EZLN focus is not the state, but rather the people. This group aims to create a free, democratic and fair country and world by struggling together with the people to resist the same enemy, neoliberal globalization. During this process, the ideals of justice, democracy and freedom cannot be consolidated or abandoned under any circumstances. Good Government Juntas and autonomous municipalities display the prevalence of these ideals. Under pressure from the state and faced with a lack of resources, the EZLN has nevertheless continued to struggle for these principles. Autonomous municipalities and experiences in education, health, judiciary policy and security reveal a new society and politics, outside the realm of classical state politics. Having power is not important for establishing change; change is a continuous process on the path to revolution and a new world.

The EZLN always shows its adherence to these main features. It never loses its focus on democracy and participation while organizing the movement and taking action. Everyone joins the movement with equal respect and people act together in non-

hierarchical cooperation. The EZLN has given up arms and carried its struggle into the wider, peaceful realm of civil society. These EZLN principles allow the group to “be power,” without taking power from state. In all EZLN acts and events, the group’s understanding of and relation with power can be seen.

Chapter 4: The MST and the Occupation of Land, since 1984

While all this was happening in Mexico, Brazil, the largest country of Latin America with all its own contradictions, could not escape the effects of neoliberalism or avoid being another scene of resistance to neoliberalism. The fifth-largest country in the world, with 150,000,000 inhabitants, Brazil covers 8,500,000 square kilometers of land. In Brazil in 1950, 80% of those dependent on agriculture owned 3% of the land. The other 97% of land was owned by 20% of the agricultural population, 0.6% of whom owned over 50% of the best land.¹⁴⁴ While such a concentration of landownership exists, no successful agriculture and land reform could happen. There were past attempts at land invasion and land reform, but they never met great success. In 1956, on the Engenho Galilea plantation, the workers took over the estate and the sugar factory. The state of Pernambuco indemnified the owners of the plantation and distributed the land among the workers.¹⁴⁵ However, this trend did not deepen or spread to other parts of the country at that time. Land reform was similarly unsuccessful. One serious attempt was made by the Goulart government, which planned to seize 9% of the agricultural land and distribute it to 150,000 peasants. Although the scheme was foiled by the 1964 military coup, a land statute was passed by the military government in November 1964. By 1968, the census-making and surveying necessary for the application of the statute had not been completed. Eventually it became a dead letter.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ “History,” <http://www.christusrex.org/www2/mst/history.html>, Accessed 05 November 2007.

¹⁴⁵ “History.”

¹⁴⁶ “History.”

4.1. Background of the MST

MST grew out of these difficult peasant conditions and experiences. Between 1950 and 1964, the first modern Brazilian peasant organizations and movements appeared. The most important three were *Ligas Camponesas* (the Peasant League), *Ultabas*¹⁴⁷ and *Master*^{148, 149}. However, the 1964 military coup brought an end to all of this; the idea of land reform had to wait for another time. The military coup drove the process of capitalist modernization. The interest of multinational corporations in the lands of Brazil, the more highly concentrated ownership of land and the migration of peasants to the cities in hopes of finding industrial jobs all proceeded in classic fashion. Ownership of land fell into the hands of big companies and wealthy families, while their peasant employees earned little money and the peasants who migrated to cities could not find jobs and were forced to build homes in the expanding slums. While all this was happening, the miracle of the Brazilian economy created by the military coup nearly came to an end. As a result, pressure from the people for democratization encouraged the struggling peasant unions to build power and seek the support of the Church via salvation theology. These factors created the conditions in which the MST was born.

It can be claimed that the struggles between 1978 and 1984 were the first sparks of the MST's existence. The experiences and success in land occupations during this period showed the people that they did have the power to change their own destiny. They did not have to wait passively for the government to act on the land issue. The land occupation of Macali was the first occupation during the military dictatorship, and the occupations continued in Brilhante, Anonni, Santa Catarina, Sao Paulo and Mato Grosso

¹⁴⁷ *Ultabas: Uniones de Labradores y Trabajadores Agrícolas del Brasil*, or the Brazilian Unions of Agricultural Workers and Peasants

¹⁴⁸ *Master: Movimiento de los Agricultores Sin Tierra*, or the Landless Peasants Movement

¹⁴⁹ Marta Harnecker, trans. Deniz Tuna, *Bir Hareket Yaratmak MST Topraksız Kır İşçileri Hareketi* (İstanbul: Kalkedon, 2006), 27.

do Sul.¹⁵⁰ The Encruzilhada Natalino camp and the experiences gained there were also the result of old occupations and auxiliary support for other occupations around the country.

4.2. Foundation of the MST and First Years: 1984 – 1990

The First National Landless Workers' Meeting was held between 20 and 22 January in 1984. Popular leaders of the land occupations, nearly 100 representatives from 13 states, attended. This meeting was also the founding date of the MST. The movement was described as an autonomous mass movement for land and agricultural reform.¹⁵¹ Its slogan was “Land for Those Who Work on It (*Terra Para Quem Nela Trabalha*).”¹⁵² The following year, the First Congress was held between 29 and 31 January, attended by 1,500 delegates from 23 states. Their slogan was “Land occupation is the only solution (*Só ocupação é a solução!*)” As a result, land occupations increased in number. The First National Meeting of Settlers was held in May 1986 to determine how to best organize settlers and encourage them in certain production types.¹⁵³

It is not enough for the peasants to conquer the land; they must also have the conditions to work it: without machinery, seeds, credits, technical know-how to allow them to use the progress made in technological revolution; without outlets for their products – instead of becoming a space for freedom, the land becomes a nightmare and they end up selling it at very low prices, or simply abandoning it.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Harnecker, 38.

¹⁵¹ Harnecker, 44-45.

¹⁵² “History of MST Slogans,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=slogans>, Accessed 6 November 2007.

¹⁵³ Harnecker, 49.

¹⁵⁴ Marta Harnecker, *Landless Movement-Building: A Social Movement*, 24, <http://www.rebellion.org/harnecker/landless300802.pdf>, Accessed 6 November 2007.

The Fifth National Meeting was held in 1989. This meeting was important because a new slogan was born here and it had great influence upon the movement. Before this meeting, from 1986 to 1989, land occupations and large associations had been established and the struggle deepened and widened throughout this process. The group's first educational experiences were also undertaken during this period. First, a laboratory was established in Santos de Morais. This laboratory aimed to teach peasants about the advantages of division of labor and the importance of cooperation. However, this laboratory could not achieve its intended successes because it was too scientific and disconnected from local dynamics and peasant life and culture.¹⁵⁵ Lessons were learned from this experience and the redesigned Training Courses Integrated into Production (*Cursos de Formacion Integrada a la Producción*, or FIP) was initiated. This program was more connected to the life of peasants, who learned both technical and political skills when not busy with farm work or other agricultural task. After all these events, the Fifth National Meeting was held in 1989 with a great sense of euphoria. The popular new slogan, "Occupy, resist, produce," was thus born at this meeting. Attendees strongly believed that the settlements had to generate a new type of society.¹⁵⁶ The goal was not just to occupy lands, but also to produce crops on the occupied lands and to continue and widen the occupations.

4.3. The MST Grows: 1990 – 1999

Lula lost the presidential elections against Collor de Melo in 1990. This affected the social movements, undermining their hopes and will to act. As a result, the 1990s were dead years for the social movements of Brazil.¹⁵⁷ The Second National MST Congress was held in such an atmosphere. It took place in Brasília, between 8 and 10

¹⁵⁵ Harnecker, 52-54.

¹⁵⁶ Harnecker, 26.

¹⁵⁷ Harnecker, 56.

May 1990, with the participation of 5,000 delegates from all over Brazil and the presence of ten foreign delegations.¹⁵⁸ To them, the new presidency of Collor meant repression and attack by the state. They discovered that, to protect the movement, they needed to increase the organic links with occupied settlements and further develop the occupied settlements. For the MST to survive as a nationwide movement and overcome the isolation imposed by state institutions, it needed more avenues for economic and political expression.¹⁵⁹ As a result of this, a first cooperative, known as the Cooperatives for Agricultural and Cattle-Raising Production (CPAS), was established. However, cooperatives cannot always respond to local needs. They tend to operate on a more general level, and grand or general solutions do not always solve regional or local problems. Sometimes there is a need for a more local solution. Therefore, the MST created the Settlers Cooperative System (SCA). The SCA is active in the education of technicians and also in the management of the cooperatives, analyzing the market and looking into the economic viability of the investments that are made.¹⁶⁰ Along economic lines, they aimed to create their own credit system, establishing the Central Offices of Agricultural Cooperatives (CCA) and the Confederation of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives of Brazil (CONCRAB) in 1992. With such organizations and tools, the MST is better able to develop occupied lands and respond to repression from the state or capitalists in economic terms.

The end of 1992 was also the end of Collor, as Itamar became the new president of Brazil. This change gave the MST more room to breathe and to develop itself. Itamar was the first president to negotiate with the MST, via his Labor Minister, and he wanted to officially meet with an MST delegation. Between 1992 and 1994, the MST made use of this chance and continued to develop, calling the Third National MST Congress into session in 1995. Before the National Congress, they organized a National Seminar

¹⁵⁸ “2nd National Congress of MST,” <http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-13.phtml?rd=2NDNATIO111&ng=e&sc=3&th=46&se=0>, Accessed 7 November 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Martins, 40.

¹⁶⁰ “MST Social Projects,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/summary.html>, Accessed 7 November 2007.

on Cooperation at the end of 1994. Their needs, past failures and ways to improve conditions in the occupied lands were all discussed in this seminar. However, the most important thing that happened before the 1994 National Congress was the foundation of Iterra, the Technical Institute for Training and Research on Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Técnico de Capacitación e Investigación de la Reforma Agraria*).¹⁶¹ Iterra was found in Veranópolis, Rio Grande do Sul. Its first task was to take over the Technical Course on Cooperative Management (TAC), and later it decided to organize a teachers' course, aimed at training professors and named the Josue de Castro School.¹⁶² Iterra provides the following courses:

- TAC: Technician in Administration of Cooperatives;
- Normal mid-level courses, for rural secular teaching;
- Specialization course in Cooperative Administration: CEACOOB, in partnership;
- with the University of Brasília, *Unisinos e Unicamp*;
- Mid-level courses emphasizing social communications;
- Nursing and community health courses;
- and supplementary courses, primary and secondary, for nighttime workers.¹⁶³

The third National MST Congress took place in Brasília, 24 to 27 July 1995, with more than 5,000 delegates from every state in Brazil in attendance. During the conference, in addition to studies and debates, there were several demonstrations and protests: in front of the American Embassy, at the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), at the National Congress and at the President's residence.¹⁶⁴ This congress also began the connection between the MST and the people of Brazil. The struggle of landless workers and the MST would be permanently linked in the future. People were beginning to understand that the development of the nation would depend

¹⁶¹ Harnecker, 28.

¹⁶² Harnecker, 28.

¹⁶³ "About," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=book/print/16>, Accessed 7 November 2007.

¹⁶⁴ "3rd National Congress of MST," <http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-13.phtml?rd=3RDNATIO112&ng=e&sc=3&th=46&se=0>, Accessed 7 November 2007.

on the development of the peasants. As a result of these ideas, a new slogan of MST was again formed: “Agrarian Reform: A fight for all!” (*Reforma agraria: Uma luta de todos!*)¹⁶⁵

The next year, the MST began a great new wave of land occupation. Looking at the statistics, the increase in occupations and participating families can be clearly seen in Table-1.

Table 1.¹⁶⁶

MST LAND OCCUPATIONS 1990-1996

Year	Occupations	Families	Hectares of Land
1990	43	11,484	----
1991	51	9,862	7,037,722
1992	49	18,885	5,692,211
1993	54	17,587	3,221,252
1994	52	16,860	1,819,963
1995	93	31,531	3,250,731
1996	176	45,218	----
Totals	518	151,427	21,021,879

To understand the land occupations and how the MST succeeded in occupying private lands and building such power, it should be kept in mind that, in its actions, the MST also makes use of legal tools recognized by state: the INCRA and the Brazilian constitution. While the MST fights against the system in favor of the peasants, it also uses the system’s own weapons against it. These “legal” tools did not entirely open the way for the MST or single-handedly build the power that made the MST the largest social movement in Latin America, but they certainly helped.

¹⁶⁵ “History of MST Slogans.”

¹⁶⁶ Mark S. Langevin and Peter Rosset, “The Landless Workers Movement in Brazil,” *News From Brazil* no.287 (17 September 1997), <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/42/013.html>, Accessed 9 November 2007.

The current Brazilian Constitution was accepted on 5 October 1988. From 1964 to 1985, the country had been ruled by a military government, which impinged upon many individual rights in the name of democracy. In 1984, when it became clear that the military would leave the government, the Brazilian population engaged in a massive campaign, trying to change the old constitution.¹⁶⁷ The social and political struggle for a new constitution was finalized in 1988. The MST saw its occupations and struggle for land reform legalized by the new constitution. Chapter III, Agricultural and Land Policy and Land Reform, of Title VII, The Economic and Social Order, is the main constitutional tool used by the MST. Articles 184 through 191 are related to agricultural issues and land reform.¹⁶⁸ The constitution requires the Brazilian government "to expropriate for the purpose of agrarian reform, rural property that is not performing its social function."¹⁶⁹

As per the related articles of constitution, the MST forced the government and its organs to begin agricultural and land reforms. While the state, because of the influence of powerful landowners, is somewhat indisposed to act efficiently on this issue, the MST has used its land occupation tactics efficiently. With the rights given to it by the constitution, the MST can carry the issue of land reform to justice and to the legal state institutions. The MST identifies unproductive rural land that it does not believe is meeting its social function and occupies it, to remind the federal government of its constitutional responsibility. Upon occupation, a legal process commences to expropriate the land and grant the title to the landless workers.¹⁷⁰

One other key actor in this legal process is INCRA. Constitutional articles and laws determined the government's responsibility for land reform, and the government

¹⁶⁷ "Constitutions of Brazil -1988," <http://www.v-brazil.com/government/laws/constitution-1988.html>, Accessed 25 January 2008.

¹⁶⁸ "Brazil Constitution," <http://www.v-brazil.com/government/laws/titleVII.html>, Accessed 25 January 2008.

¹⁶⁹ "Constitutional Authority: Legality of Land Occupations," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=constitutionalauthority>, Accessed 5 December 2007.

¹⁷⁰ "Constitutional Authority: Legality of Land Occupations."

deals with the issue through the INCRA. This organization's mission is "to implement the policy of land reform and implement the national land restructuring, contributing to sustainable rural development." Its vision, meanwhile, is to "[be the] international reference solutions of social inclusion."¹⁷¹ The INCRA has the task of classifying the underused farms according to their size or level of exploitation, revealing the problems of the current structure and promoting its reform.¹⁷²

The INCRA decided to categorize land as unproductive and available for land reform. It then confiscated such land and gave it to peasants who had no lands. As described by the INCRA, "The property [farm] considered unproductive by [the] INCRA is that [which], although agricultural, is wholly or partly unexplored by its owner or occupier. In this condition, it is liable to expropriation by social interest for the purposes of land reform."¹⁷³ The MST would thus begin a land occupation and apply to the INCRA to finish the legal process of the occupation.

Typically, a land occupation is preceded by a substantial amount of preparation, including agricultural training. Once the occupation begins, the MST applies to the INCRA to certify that the land qualifies for expropriation. According to Sergio Sauer, a former coordinator and advisor for the Pastoral Land Commission and currently an aide to a federal senator of the Workers' Party, once a decision is made to expropriate a parcel of land, the INCRA is responsible for everything, including all legal and economic procedures. The INCRA issues a 20-year bond to the land owner, as the MST model is not without compensation, although the purchase price is usually set below market price. The INCRA also funds production credits once the landless have won land rights.

¹⁷¹ Brazil, National Institute of Agrarian Reform, "Missao e Visao," <http://www.incra.gov.br/>, Accessed 27 January 2008.

¹⁷² http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instituto_Nacional_de_Coloniza%C3%A7%C3%A3o_e_Reforma_Agr%C3%A1ria, Accessed 27 January 2008.

¹⁷³ "Instituto Nacional de Colonizacao e Reforma Agraria," <http://www.incra.gov.br/index.php?visualiza=53,52>, Accessed 27 January 2008.

The MST did not passively wait for the INCRA to fulfill its duty of land reform. With only the INCRA's approach to land distribution, the reform would continue for decades. The MST, meanwhile, has more than 1.5 million landless members.¹⁷⁴ The administration of Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994 – 2002) claimed to have settled 546,683 families between 1995 and 2001 via the INCRA program, but the MST maintains that the figure stands at only 266,998. Moreover, the MST argues, even the limited agrarian reforms in recent years would not have happened without continual pressure.¹⁷⁵ With this large number of MST members, the organization would not be fully landed until the 2030s. MST pressure on the INCRA helps to speed the process, while the use of legal avenues helps the MST convince people to join its movement and occupations. Because of state recognition of the right to unoccupied land after a legal process, people are now confident that they will not be forced from the land by old owners or the paramilitary. These legal tools allow the MST to create new possibilities and inspire people to join the movement more readily.

Despite the MST's use of the legal methods provided by the constitution and state organizations such as the INCRA, the rise in occupation shown in Table 1 has been accompanied by state repression and the death of many peasants. The 1996 massacre of 19 demonstrating landless farm workers by the military police in Eldorado do Carajás, in the state of Para, was the peak of the state's aggression and militancy.¹⁷⁶ In reaction, the MST marched to the capitol to protest the attitude of the state as reflected in that attack, which had repressed the movement and attempted to isolate it by severing its communications.¹⁷⁷ This march was also a memorial for the 19 MST members who had been killed and the 69 wounded, many shot in the back, by the military police while on a

¹⁷⁴ "What is the MST?" <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=whatismst>, Accessed 28 January 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Matthew Flynn, "Brazil's Landless Workers Movement," *Citizen Action in the Americas* no.6 (April 2003), http://americas.irc-online.org/citizen-action/series/06-mst_body.html, Accessed 28 January 2008.

¹⁷⁶ John L. Hammond, "The MST and the Media: Competing Images of the Brazilian Landless Farmworkers' Movement," *Latin American Politics and Society* 46 no.4 (Winter 2004), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4000/is_200401/ai_n9396507, Accessed 9 November 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Harnecker, 64-65.

peaceful march along the highway at Eldorado dos Carajás, protesting unfulfilled government promises. The MST went on the offensive and, in February 1997, organized a two-month national march for “Land Reform, Employment and Justice” to the center of political power in Brasília. From across the nation, 1,300 MST members covered 1,500 km to arrive in the nation’s capitol on 17 April 1997, the first anniversary of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre.¹⁷⁸ This march helped the MST explain itself to the people and defeat the isolationist policies of the state. As can be understood from the name of the march, the MST was aware that the nation’s problems were closely related to land reform, but not entirely connected to it. Unemployment in cities and lack of justice in the state were also acting as obstacles to a democratic solution.

4.4. The MST Reaffirms and Internationalizes: 2000 – 2007

The Fourth National Congress was held in Brasília in August 2000, with 11,000 landless Brazilians participating.¹⁷⁹ Until this congress, since 1997, the occupations had continued, settlements were developed and the problems that were faced in production, education, security or any other areas were continually addressed. The MST’s struggle and resistance did not cease in between the big events. It constantly dealt with the more practical and daily issues that will create a new society and new people. This characteristic of MST and similar practices criticized. There are two main reasons under the critiques. First, movement dealt these issues because it seen hopeless to fight change everything. Socialist dreams and real socialism experiences were defeated. As a result these movements turned to small changes and struggle for local not global. Secondly, these tries are also seen in projects’ that supported by World Bank. However, these

¹⁷⁸ “MST on the March for Agrarian Reform and Changes in the Lula Government’s Neoliberal Economic Policy,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=node/162>, Accessed 9 November 2007.

¹⁷⁹ “History of the MST,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=history>, Accessed 10 November 2007.

movements always claimed the importance of international cooperation and international systemic changes. So, these critiques are not so true.

At the Fourth National Congress, the MST reaffirmed its basic principles, those which characterize it as the best organized peasant movement in Brazil. Among the commitments that were reaffirmed were: to struggle for land by means of occupations and to strengthen the organization of the movement; to contribute to the strengthening of other peasant movements, such as the MPA (Movement of Small Farmers); to fight against the agricultural economic model that has as its basis the development of transgenic plants; to develop policies to build a new technological model for agriculture; and to maintain the debate on important questions about biodiversity, water and agrarian reform.¹⁸⁰ The MST's manifesto to the Brazilian people was also released at this congress. In the manifesto, the MST answered such questions as "What is the source of these problems?" and "Is our country a lost cause?" with the following answers:

...it is true that our society has always been unjust. Like any capitalist society, the poor have always been exploited and humiliated. And the rich class, earning more and more all the time, has always repressed the people and submitted it to the interests of international capital...However, the Brazilian people must rise up, organise itself, and take to the streets, in order to struggle for their historic rights. It is, indeed, possible to build another project for Brazil -- a Popular Project that tends to the needs of the people...we must continue struggling, always. Every social conquest has been the result of massive, popular struggles. Together with the Brazilian people, we hope to construct a Popular Project -- a project that will regain our national sovereignty, our dignity and the well being of all the population.¹⁸¹

The MST is aware of the importance of national and international solidarity. Connection and cooperation with other people and their struggles is important in order to develop the anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist struggle. Examples of this awareness were

¹⁸⁰ "4th National Congress of the MST," <http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-13.phtml?rd=4THNATIO113&ng=e&sc=3&th=46&se=0>, Accessed 10 November 2007.

¹⁸¹ "The MST's Manifesto to the Brazilian People," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/manifesto.html>, Accessed 10 November 2007.

seen in 2001. A representative of Brazil's Landless Farmers' Movement went on a three-week speaking tour of the US, describing both the struggles and successes of the growing effort against rural hunger and poverty and for environmental protection, especially in the Amazon rainforest.¹⁸² Also at the beginning of 2001, the WSF was held in Porto Alegre between 25 and 30 January. The MST was a co-host of the World Social Forum, along with the Workers Party. The WSF "anti-Davos" movement was the brainchild of Teddy Goldsmith, and the two principal agencies used to set Goldsmith's idea into motion were the Brazilian Workers' Party and the MST, along with Bernard Cassen, who is the director of France's *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the leader of the French ATTAC movement (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for the Aid of the Citizenry), and, most recently, would-be travel agent for the Zapatistas' Subcomandante Marcos.¹⁸³ The WSF became one of the centers of the anti-neoliberal globalization movements and a key meeting and discussion point. This has increased international solidarity between resistance movements around the world. The MST is always aware that its struggle began in Brazil but will not end there.

The following year, the MST was more active, not only in the WSF, but also in other social uprisings across the country and the continent. The 4th of February, 2002, marked the beginning of the MST's participation in the opening of the Continental Campaign against the Free Trade Area for Americas (FTAA).¹⁸⁴ More than 10,000,000 people participated in a plebiscite on the FTAA. MST members marched among more than 50,000 people during the World Social Forum, a march organized by both Via Campesina, an international rural workers' organization, and Via Campesina of Brazil, a network of various rural Brazilian workers' movements.¹⁸⁵ This march was designed to support the plebiscite, in which 98.33% of the people voted against Brazil's signing of

¹⁸² Carol Fouke, "Brazil's land reform seeks awareness and solidarity," *National Council of Churches News* (10 October 2001), <http://www.mstbrazil.org/nccNews101001.html>, Accessed 10 November 2007.

¹⁸³ Gretchen Small, "World Social Forum," *Executive Intelligence Review* 28 no. 32 (24 August 2001), http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2001/2832world_soc_for.html, Accessed 11 November 2007.

¹⁸⁴ "History of the MST," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=history>, Accessed 11 November 2007.

¹⁸⁵ "History of the MST."

the Free Trade Area of the Americas treaty. The results were released on 17 September in a press conference attended by representatives of the National Commission on the Plebiscite, including the MST, the Unique Workers Center (CUT) and the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC), among others.¹⁸⁶ The MST took an active role in this process, much like the EZLN did in its own referendums. While claiming that everything was done for the people and that change was designed for them, the MST also asked that all of society join in making the changes together. The MST's membership made the World Social Forum more crowded and active. Some 2,000 peasants involved in the network of landless workers' movements called Via Campesina cooked meals together and slept in a gymnasium. During the day, they attended events in a nearby auditorium, sharing strategies about how to fight land enclosures and organize successful squatters' movements and land takeovers.¹⁸⁷ At the end of forum, with the joint leadership of the MST, the social movements co-published a final declaration entitled "Resisting Neoliberalism, Militarism, and War: For Peace and Social Justice." It declared their struggle against neoliberalism and the war that followed 9/11. While this struggle continued, all movements would act in solidarity.

Nearly 100,000 people participated in the third WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 23 – 28 January 2003, as part of the movement to build an alternative to a world dominated by economic crisis and war.¹⁸⁸ The third WSF was important because, while the MST continued its struggle in Brazil, they also had an opportunity to meet with other movements from around the world, discuss with them, listen to their experiences and work to create a new solidarity centered on anti-neoliberalism. The MST also increased its land occupations during this period and continued to develop the settlements, striving to not only produce agricultural goods but to also create the first examples of a new society. The MST and other social movements said "no" to war, the World Trade

¹⁸⁶ "Brazil's Consulta (Popular Plebiscite) Votes Are In!" http://www.mstbrazil.org/20020924_355.html, Accessed 11 November 2007.

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/march02peters.htm>, Accessed 11 November 2007.

¹⁸⁸ Lee Sustar, Lance Selfa and Orlando, "Voices against war and neoliberalism: World Social Forum," *International Socialist Review* (April 2003), http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Dissent/World_Social_Forum_03.html, Accessed 11 November 2007.

Organization(WTO), international debt, the G-8 and oppression of women, calling for solidarity with all peoples in struggle. In 2004, the WSF was held in India and, because of the distance, MST members could not attend in large numbers. However, in preparation for the next WSF, army soldiers and nine rural workers from the MST began construction of the structures that would house the WSF activities, which would take place 26 – 31 January in Porto Alegre.¹⁸⁹ Despite the fact that Lula was in power, there were still murders of MST members. In 2004, 32 landless workers were killed, victims of the *latifúndio* system.¹⁹⁰ The MST never abandoned its struggle or its occupation tactics because of this suppression and death. To the contrary, the deaths and massacres later became a part of the *mística*, or mysticism, of the MST, and played an important role in establishing the identity of the movement and the resistance.

The fifth WSF was held as planned in 2005 in Porto Alegre, once again gathering people from all over the world. There were 155,000 attendees from 135 different countries. Two big demonstrations were held during the fifth WSF, one against the Iraq war and the other against the FTAA.¹⁹¹ During this WSF, Hugo Chavez met with the MST and visited an MST settlement. During these years the WSF became a school and helped the MST to forge close partnerships with other organizations. The most important MST event of the year was the “National March for Agrarian Reform.” On 2 May 2005, over 12,000 MST members and supporters left the city of Goiania and embarked upon a two-week, 230 km journey to the federal capitol, Brasilia. The sea of marchers waving their red MST flags and banners did not only call for agrarian reform, but they also demanded radical changes in the neoliberal economic policies of Lula’s government. In route to Brasília, the marchers were warmly received by residents of small towns who wanted to know more about the lives of the *Sem Terra*, the landless, as MST members are popularly called. The *Sem Terra* were invited to address schools and churches to explain the purpose of the march, to talk about life in their plastic tent camps and to

¹⁸⁹ “Results of Agrarian Reform in 2004,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=81>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

¹⁹⁰ “Results of Agrarian Reform in 2004.”

¹⁹¹ “Another World Is Possible and MST news briefs...” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=node/161>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

describe their struggle for a better life.¹⁹² The MST and the other social movements that supported this march prepared a proposal to outline what needed be done to change the life of the people. This proposal contained sections entitled “In Rural Areas, for Peasant Agriculture and Land Reform,” “Economic Policy” and “General Policy.”¹⁹³ Joao Pedro Stedile¹⁹⁴ explained the aims and the results of the march in this way:

The objective of the march was to restore land reform as a subject for public discussion along with the subject of the nature of Brazilian problems and the need to change economic policy. We also sought to resolve the immediate problem of the delay in land reform in the states and to get the federal government to implement structural measures. In our view, we reached all these goals. So despite the sacrifices of the people who participated, it was an absolute success. It showed that there exist energies in Brazilian society that can be used to build a development project for the country.¹⁹⁵

Caracas, Venezuela, hosted the sixth WSF in 2006. The MST also joined this forum, but not with the mass attendance that was seen in Porto Alegre. It is clear that they cannot be as active and efficient in a different country as they are when they are hosting. However, they join as they are able and continue to raise international solidarity among people who resist neoliberalism and fight for another world. In 2007, on Monday, 11 June, the 5th National Congress of the Landless Workers’ Movement of Brazil kicked off in Brasilia with more than 18,000 delegates in attendance from 24

¹⁹² “MST on the March for Agrarian Refrom and Changes in the Lula Government’s Neoliberal Economic Policy,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=node/162>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

¹⁹³ The proposal can be viewed at <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=marchproposals>, Accessed 26 June 2008.

¹⁹⁴ “Joao Pedro Stédile (Lagoa Vermelha, December 25, 1953) is an economist and social activist Brazil. It is the current leader of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) It is formed in economics by the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC-RS), with post-graduate studies at Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). He has as a member of the Committee of Manufacturers of Grape, Trade Union of Rural Workers of Rio Grande do Sul Assessorou and Pastoral Land Comiision(CPT) in Rio Grande do Sul and in the national and worked at the Registry of Agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul. Involved since 1979 in the activities of the struggle for land reform, one of the founders of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) and currently a member of its national direction” (“Joao Pedro Stédile,” http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo%C3%A3o_Pedro_St%C3%A9dile, Accessed 12 November 2007.).

¹⁹⁵ “Evaluations of the National March for Land Reform,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=node/168>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

states across the country, under the slogan, "Agrarian Reform: For Social Justice and Popular Sovereignty."¹⁹⁶ Also in attendance were 181 international delegates, representing 21 peasant organizations from around the world. The MST remains committed to helping with the organization of people, to aid them to struggle for their rights and against inequalities and social injustices. In the letter that they addressed to the people of Brazil, the MST members emphasized the importance of networking among all resisting organizations and people, in order to fight national and international adversaries of land and agricultural reform, and the importance of international solidarity with people who suffer the same things.¹⁹⁷ The MST closed its Fifth National Congress on Friday with marked support for the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), the integration group formed by Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua.¹⁹⁸ Joao Pedro Stedile summed up the Congress with these words:

The Congress was a large gathering of activists from 24 states, a time for reflection and collective analysis about the state of agrarian reform and Brazilian society. It was also a time for mobilization, with a march to denounce how the Brazilian state, represented by the three Powers of the Republic, impedes agrarian reform. Furthermore, after two years of discussion in the encampments and settlements, we finalized our Agrarian Program which presents our proposal for Brazilian agriculture.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ “[5th National Congress] ALAI Interview: The MST’s New Proposal for Agrarian Reform,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=5thcongressnewagrarianreformproposal>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

¹⁹⁷ The letter can be viewed at <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=5thcongresslettertobrazilianpeople>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

¹⁹⁸ “[5th National Congress] Brazilian Landless Support ALBA Integration Effort,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=mstsupportforalba5thcongress>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

¹⁹⁹ “MST wants a new agrarian reform model,” <http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=4028>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

4.5. The Success of the MST and its Main Characteristics

Throughout its quarter century adventure, the MST has achieved many things. Starting from just one occupation, the MST has become the largest social movement in Latin America with an estimated 1.5 million landless members organized in 23 of Brazil's 27 states. Since its founding in 1984, the MST has won land titles for 250,000 families.²⁰⁰ According to the MST, it taught over 50,000 landless workers to read and write between the years 2002 and 2005.²⁰¹ There have been many other MST achievements and the group has earned respectable success and fame as a social movement. What lies underneath this success? What are the special features of the MST that have allowed it to become one of the largest social movements in the world?

The main reason for the group's survival has been its occupations. Occupations are direct-action events and their results are immediately felt in people's lives. As a result, occupations clearly became a school for members of the MST. Before, during and after the occupations, they learned much. Before an occupation, the first decision to be made is what land should be occupied. Militants connect with an important person of that region, such as a parliament member, lawyer or priest, who has the trust of both the people and the MST, and this person becomes the bridge between the two. Next, the group starts to communicate with people and explain who they are and what they are doing. When they reach enough families who are willing to participate in the occupation, they call a meeting among the families and set the occupation date. Besides land, what do occupations bring to the movement? First, they bring class consciousness and organized uprisings, replacing old values of private property with new values of life and labor, while reemphasizing the importance of being organized.²⁰² Occupations make the

²⁰⁰ Jason Mark, "Brazil's MST: Taking Back the Land," *The Multinational Monitor* 22 no.1-2 (Jan/Feb 2001), <http://multinationalmonitor.org/mm2001/01jan-feb/corp2.html>, Accessed 12 November 2007.

²⁰¹ "Landless Workers' Movement," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landless_Workers%27_Movement#History, Accessed 12 November 2007.

²⁰² Harnecker, 75-90.

MST's struggle more visible and the direct results of the occupations have allowed them to build a huge movement with millions of members. The second outcome of the occupations is the occupied settlements. In this case, questions of agricultural production, organization and settlement design must first be answered. Then education, health, rules and many other issues are also solved within the movement. Next, the MST establishes relations with other organizations and movements. The MST thinks on and acts for international issues. They never lose sight of the real problem, neoliberal globalization. While the source of the problem is global, the group believes that it should be resisted at the local level without losing the global perspective. The MST, like the EZLN, is uniquely successful because of this multi-layered perspective. While they arose from a local problem, they are not stuck at the local level.

The success and uniqueness of the MST is a result of its action-oriented style and the internal organization and principles that guide it. First, it is a movement totally comprised of landless workers. They are not led by outsiders. Salvation lies among the peasants themselves, and without them, solutions would be meaningless. While it is a peasant movement, it nevertheless has features that differentiate it from its ancestors. The MST incorporates the whole family, both in the struggle and in decision-making, from old men to children, and women play an important role in everything the group does. This equal participation makes each member of the family feel that he or she is taken into account, and this strengthens both the decision to struggle and individual commitment.²⁰³ It is a peasant movement but it does not exclude other people who struggle for agricultural and land reform. Furthermore, the MST does not reduce the issue of national reform to merely an issue of land. The occupation and redistribution of land is a process that has been happening for centuries. Under capitalism, in the neoliberal age of globalization, one peasant family has no chance of protecting its land and raising crops. In a few years, the land will be gone, seized by wealthy outsiders. The MST realizes that agricultural reform is a complicated socio-political issue. Because of this, peasants and the MST work together to shape a new political structure.

²⁰³ Harnecker, 108.

However, I believe that it is essentially the principles guiding the movement that create most of the MST's differences and successes. The first such principle is leadership. Ten hypotheses on MST leadership, outlined by Petras and Veltmeyer, explain the group's true importance. These ten hypotheses were seen in many activities and experiences of MST. Mentioned issues in different parts of this thesis concentrated in these hypotheses which are:

The MST leaders;

- have deep and continuing roots in the countryside and among the constituency they are organizing;
- the leaders are relatively well educated and committed to continuing education, thus securing the learning and teaching skills to diagnose social realities and develop appropriate strategies;
- the primary loyalties of the leaders of the MST are to that organization, [and] they do not have any conflicting loyalties with other political groups that could lead to ideological divisions and undermine their unity of purpose;
- the main source of recruitment is based on practical problem solving that attracts doers rather than ideologues;
- the leaders have accumulated practical experience via continuing direct actions that enhance their capacity to organize and carry out successful actions that can, and do, attract new members and supporters;
- the leaders tend to be self-reliant and less dependent on electoral politicians, thus able and willing to engage in bringing about change via direct action;
- there is a common understanding or consensus of the leaders as to who are their common enemies, the nature of state power and the impact of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on their followers and the process of agrarian reform;

- the leadership has a realistic view of the international and national configuration or structure of power and whose interests it serves;
- the movement leaders have a common vision of an alternative social system that informs their actions, thus motivating the organisation and providing guidelines to action;
- the leaders have the élan and mystique required in bringing about change in the future, thus providing the motivation to sustain action in times of repression and opposition by formidable adversaries.²⁰⁴

The second important principle is the division of tasks. The MST attempts to distribute tasks and functions among all the members at all organizational levels so that everyone can have a specific role and feel important. Everyone's participation is enhanced, thus avoiding the centralization of power, which often leads to individualistic deviations.²⁰⁵ One other key principle is discipline: not a strict and hierarchical discipline, but discipline with respect to the collective decisions. The fourth is study and investigation. The MST encourages its members to study everything related to its activities.²⁰⁶

The fifth principle is training for the cadres. It is very important to have educated and voluntary cadres in any social movement. The MST creates such cadres through a formation that includes education about Brazil's experiences in the struggle for land, a broad (but not dogmatic) theoretical formation, the Gospel, Marxist classics, Brazilian and Latin American classics, national events and studies of political and social leaders and their oral presentations.²⁰⁷ The education provided by the MST is the group's most important feature. While it educates people, it also creates new people and a new society. The MST is establishing a new land in which formal power cannot dictate its

²⁰⁴ James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, "The social dynamics of Brazil's Rural Landless Workers' Movement: Ten hypotheses on successful leadership," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 39 issue 1 (February 2002), 82-92.

²⁰⁵ Harnecker, 113.

²⁰⁶ Harnecker, 114.

²⁰⁷ Harnecker, 114-115.

ideas through education. The MST is breaking one leg of the table that supports the transformation of power culture and existing systems throughout the generations.

The sixth important principle is a positive relationship between the leader and the base. This can be easily understood from the following statement: “No matter how important the leader is, no matter what he has studied, no matter how combative and active he is, if he doesn’t keep his feet on the ground, if he doesn’t develop [...] his ties with the social base, he won’t go very far.”²⁰⁸

The other principles that guide the movement and make it successful and unique are planning, criticism and self-criticism and professionalism.

Additionally, the MST, like the EZLN, is also ready to listen to people and walk together with them. International solidarity and resistance against neoliberal globalization shapes their movement and they do not focus merely on local issues. This does not mean that local issues and problems are not important. On the contrary, they have primary importance. These movements achieve their successes because they can respond to local invitations and solve local problems. However, neither the MST nor the EZLN ever fail to see the big picture, the global reasons behind the current system. They feed from the knowledge of locals and natives but do not perpetuate their mistakes. Equality for women is a very important topic in both movements. They have abandoned classical leadership and its negative effects on movements, choosing instead collective leadership. Hierarchy and bureaucracy are the poison of social movements and inhibit their advancement. Both the MST and the EZLN decided to rid themselves of those factors in order to let the movements move forward. Both of them abandoned the traditional state-oriented strategy. Change and revolution start immediately and are not postponed until after taking power. However, the MST claims that it is still too early to deal with the state. When the correct time comes, the state will be also in the group’s target. The EZLN, meanwhile, stands further away from the state. In this sense, the MST believes more firmly in socialist revolution that the EZLN does.

²⁰⁸ Harnecker, 115.

These two chapters have illustrated the continual struggles of the MST and the EZLN. Here, we have seen what they have achieved and what they aim to achieve next. Their own experiences and words clarify what they want and how they plan to obtain their goals. In the next chapter, the issue of education will be explored to further this understanding of MST and EZLN methods and goals. Education is truly critical for the building of a new society and the transformation of the world. The next chapter will outline the importance of education and the experiences of the MST and the EZLN in this realm, while providing further ideas about how they can be power without taking power. This will prepare us for a discussion about how these movements can become new revolutionary powers and examples for other parts of the world, all by being power without having power.

Chapter 5: Education as a Revolutionary Practice

The EZLN and the MST are inspirational social movements of a new era since the end of real socialism. Under the new conditions of politics, the MST and EZLN arose and tried to design a new way to resist neoliberalism and transform society. These groups' unique histories and features were explained in the previous chapters. However, one important factor that makes the groups' successes possible remains to be discussed. This important point is education. Education quickly became a vital and crucial component of these movements, which focus heavily on educating, though not in a classical way, their members and civil society. These movements have created their own schools, training courses and other educational activities. What makes education so important to the MST and EZLN? There are two main answers to that question. First, education renders possible the continuity of movement and the transformation of society. Second, education is also valid for the state, and can be used as an adversary of movements like the MST or EZLN. As Gramsci claimed,

Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship [and] every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes.²⁰⁹

The state, as a hegemonic power, uses education according to its own ideology. By this understanding, education is a process of preparing individuals to participate as workers and consumers in market-driven development projects.²¹⁰ While education is left in the hands of hegemonic powers, it will be hard, perhaps impossible, to transform society or create a new one. The state uses education to ensure the continuity of the

²⁰⁹ Antonio Gramsci, as quoted in Diana Coben, "Revisiting Gramsci," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 27 issue 1 (April 1995), 3.

²¹⁰ T. Nisha, "Education, Civil Society, and Social Change: A Case Study of a Brazilian Social Movement," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2006), 247.

existing system. Through education, it will teach people that the existing system is the best for everyone and that resisting or struggling against the system will just cause anarchy and will not help anyone. Changing the system to create a new one, the state teaches, is impossible. Such efforts would only bring sadness and tragedy. Thus, education becomes a strategic weapon for the maintenance of the status quo. When people finish their educations, they are ready to work and consume to meet the needs of the system, and they are very far from the ideas of struggle and resistance.

As long as education is under the control of hegemonic powers that continue to decide curriculum and the pedagogy of education, the anti-systemic resistance movements will have no chance or little chance. The possible link between movements and civil society will be severed by state-controlled education. Alternative movements will be limited to narrow niches and unable to extend themselves to the masses. Many classical movements were easily destroyed by the state for this reason. Hegemonic powers easily manipulate and educate people against such movements and dissolve them. For these reasons, education is important. When such movements can seize the weapon of education from the beginning, they get a better chance to struggle against the existing system and increase their chances for transforming society.

For the MST and EZLN, another important thing about education is that it is a new form of power practice. While these movements do not act for the sake of taking power from the state, the MST and EZLN desire to transform society and create a new society. Education and educational experiences become a new power practice and a way of being power without taking power. This section of the thesis will explore the steps of this new power practice.

5.1. The Meaning of Education for the EZLN and MST

The EZLN and MST have placed importance on education from their very beginnings. When the EZLN began the public phase of its struggle on New Year's Eve, 1993, it made 11 demands, one of which was "education" (the others were work, land,

shelter, food, health, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace).²¹¹ From the beginning, they have included education in their programs and worked on it actively. Just after the EZLN started its struggle in the public arena, Marcos wrote the following about education in Chiapas:

Education? [In Chiapas?] The worst in the country. At the elementary school level, 72 out of every 100 children don't finish the first grade. More than half of the schools only offer up to a third grade education and half of the schools only have one teacher for all the courses offered. There are statistics, although they are kept secret of course, that show that many Indigenous children are forced to drop out of school due to their families' need to incorporate them into the system of exploitation. In any Indigenous community it is common to see children carrying corn and wood, cooking, or washing clothes during school hours. Of the 16,058 classrooms in 1989, only 96 were in Indigenous zones.²¹²

In response to these conditions, the EZLN placed heavy emphasis on education from the beginning, opening schools, developing new conditions of education and using education to foster a hope of a new world and better conditions, not to perpetuate the status quo.

The MST has been acting similarly. Education has been a significant and important issue. Since its creation, the MST has included in its political agenda the fight for schools and the discussion about what kinds of schools should be a part of the life of the *Sem Terra* family.²¹³ Education and schools are important for developing the movement and encouraging people to remain in the movement with their children. If peasants find land and schools available to them in these newly occupied lands, they will

²¹¹ Amber Howard, "Refusing Government Money or Teachers, Indigenous Communities Have Built More Schools and Educated More Children Than Ever Before," *The Narco News Bulletin*, <http://www.narconews.com/Issue44/article2487.html>, Accessed 15 February 2008.

²¹² "Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds A Storm and a Prophecy," http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_se_2_wind.html, Accessed 11 March 2008.

²¹³ Roseli Saleté Caldart, "Movement of the Landless Rural Workers (MST): Pedagogical Lessons," <http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-05.phtml?rd=MOVEMENT610&ng=e&sc=3&th=42&se=0>, Accessed 16 February 2008.

be more dedicated to the MST movement and will work harder to ensure its success. The MST set up a National Education Sector in 1987, just a few years after the group itself was founded, to systematize its response to educational concerns.²¹⁴ The National Education Sector achieved many successes over the years. Many schools were opened, many adults learned how to read and write, and many technical and political courses were given. Precise numbers and details of these educational projects will be discussed in the following parts of this chapter.

As it has been seen, and as it will be seen in greater detail from the upcoming examples, both the EZLN and the MST value education deeply within their movements. They have become unparalleled schools for their members, establishing educational opportunities for both children and adults.

This thesis will next discuss the theoretical base of education in these movements and then the movements' educational achievements and success, as well as a final review of the overall role of education in the movements, based on the information presented here.

5.2. The Theoretical Base of Education in the EZLN and the MST

For both the EZLN and the MST, two theoreticians' names are particularly important. The ideas of these two people shaped and influenced the understanding of education in these movements and inspired their struggle. This does not mean that these are the only two people who influenced views of education in these movements, but without them, the education issue would be meaningless for the MST and the EZLN. The two intellectuals who influenced these movements so profoundly are Antonio Gramsci²¹⁵ and Paulo Freire.²¹⁶ Gramsci's ideas on hegemony, organic intellectuals, the

²¹⁴ Liam Kane, *Popular Education and Social Change in Latin America* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2001), 98.

²¹⁵ **Antonio Gramsci** (1891 - 1937) was a leading Italian Marxist. He was an intellectual, a journalist and a major theorist who spent his last eleven years in Mussolini's prisons. During this time, he completed 32

importance of education for hegemonic power, and the role of schools in creating alternative hegemony, and Freire's ideas on education and pedagogy of the oppressed, have all helped to draw the road-map of educational experiences for these movements. Signs of this can be clearly seen in the groups' words and actions. Members and leaders of the MST give clues about the ideas that have influenced them. Stedile, one of the leaders of the MST, said the following in an interview about Gramsci:

...power isn't just in the state. Power is diluted into multiple forms beginning at home, and spreading to the community and society. It is in schools, churches and the media, as well as the state. That is something which we learned from [the Italian Marxist] Antonio Gramsci...Changes must be made at the base of society. The criticism that we make against the orthodox left parties is that they see power as only being in the presidential palace. But just changing the palace's occupant does not resolve society's fundamental problems...²¹⁷

Freire and his ideas were also important for the MST. In his lifetime, Freire was a fervent supporter of the MST. The group drew heavily on Paulo Freire for inspiration and knowledge. Celerino, a member of the MST, said in an interview about health projects that the group is using Freire's paradigms in the arena of health, just as they are used in education.²¹⁸

notebooks containing almost 3,000 pages. These notebooks were smuggled out of prison and published in Italian after the war, but did not find an English-language publisher until the 1970s. The central and guiding theme of the notebooks was the development of a new Marxist theory applicable to the conditions of advanced capitalism (<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gram.htm>, Accessed 20 February 2008.).

²¹⁶ "Paulo Freire (1921 - 1997), the Brazilian educationalist, has left a significant mark on thinking about progressive practice. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is currently one of the most quoted educational texts (especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia). Freire was able to draw upon, and weave together, a number of strands of thinking about educational practice and liberation. Sometimes some rather excessive claims are made for his work e.g. 'the most significant educational thinker of the twentieth century'. He wasn't - John Dewey would probably take that honour - but Freire certainly made a number of important theoretical innovations that have had a considerable impact on the development of educational practice - and on informal education and popular education in particular. In this piece we assess these - and briefly examine some of the critiques that can be made of his work" (<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm>, Accessed 13 March 2008.).

²¹⁷ "MST, Brazil and struggle for land," http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=8976, Accessed 23 August 2008.

²¹⁸ Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, *Cutting the Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2002), 66, 124-125, 236.

On the other hand, the EZLN did not give such clear signs of having been influenced by Freire and Gramsci. Still, their politics and educational approaches show clear traces of the thoughts of these two intellectuals. As Liam Kane showed in his book about popular education in Latin America, the experiences of the EZLN and the ideas of Freire and Gramsci are closely linked. Their educational aims, starting point and experiences show that the EZLN was also influenced by Gramsci and Freire and has become a living example of their ideas.

According to Gramsci, schools are becoming highly specialized because of the need to provide different types of knowledge and skills to the dominant and subaltern classes within capitalist societies.²¹⁹ The education provided in these schools serves solely for capitalism and hegemonic powers. Through this education, the human power needed for work and consumerism is reproduced and the possibility of resistance and struggle is eliminated. School and education are thus probably the most important areas in which the struggle for the preservation of hegemony occurs. The importance of education for hegemony is thus explained by Gramsci:

The social character of each type of school is determined by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, intended to perpetuate a determined function, ruling and subordinate. If one wishes to break this pattern needs, instead of multiplying and grading different types of vocational schools, to create a single type of formative school (primary-secondary) which would take the child up to the threshold of his choice job, forming him during this time as a person of capable of thinking, studying and ruling-or controlling those who rule.²²⁰

Modern educational conditions are not so different from the conditions that Gramsci described. Neoliberal hegemony and its supporters also use education very efficiently for their own aims. Education has been reduced to a merely economic issue. People are educated according to the system's economic needs. Educational discourse is

²¹⁹ Victor I. Rodriguez, "Awaking to the Dream: Education, Leadership, and Political-Cultural Formation in Four Neo-Zapatista Communities of Chiapas," (M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2006), 15.

²²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (New York: International Publishers, 1972).

dominated by concerns about developing human capital and privileging individual choices that follow from principles of economic rationality.²²¹ While education has such an importance, the MST and the EZLN cannot surrender the area to neoliberalism and its supporters. They must continue to struggle in the realm of education against neoliberalism.

Education is also important for the transformation of society, creating a new center of hegemony and changing the world and the people. Gramsci's visions of culture and education as arenas of political struggle and as sites of hegemonic construction, as well as resistance, have greatly influenced popular education²²² and the educational experiences of the MST and EZLN.

Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres have summarized Gramsci's contributions to education in the form of five working hypotheses. They are:

a) Insofar as hegemony is founded on coercion and consensus, it is an educative relationship; b) despite the fact that hegemony is exerted by the ruling class, it is organized in capitalist society by a particular social category: the intellectuals; c) education is the process of formation of "social conformism"; d) the state, as an "ethical state" or, indeed, as an educator, assumes the function of building a new "type" or "level" of civilization; thus, it constitutes an instrument of rationalization; e) the establishment of a classless society and the building of a collective will must be achieved through an intellectual and moral reform.²²³

From these hypotheses, it can be understood that education is used to support the hegemonic relationship, and that intellectuals took a very important role in achieving and establishing this hegemonic relationship. The transformation of society and creation of new men and women is not possible without intellectuals and educational processes. The EZLN and MST have accepted these ideas. Their works, speeches and documents

²²¹ Nisha, 46.

²²² Gustavo Fischman, "Donkeys and Superteachers: Structural Adjustment and Popular Education in Latin America," *International Review of Education* 44 no. 2-3 (1998), 204.

²²³ Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres, *Social Theory and Education* (New York: Suny Press, 1995), 253.

show us how people depend on education to transform society. Harnecker explained the spirit of education in the MST very well:

The 'different' school proposed by the MST is radically opposed to the 'official' traditional school, which, on top of being an instrument to reproduce the ideology and the customs of the ruling classes, is a powerful tool of the capitalist system to prepare cheap labor for its industries: it does not educate people, it prepares 'parts' of a productive machine, all they have to know is what is absolutely necessary to carry out their work efficiently, they must not have their own opinions, nor think with their own brain – they must do their work 'automatically.' So they create human beings who are not only individualistic, competitive and machista, but also passive and dependent. On the contrary, the MST schools concentrate their work on the integral preparation of the children, on the preparation of 'a new man and a new woman, for a new society and a new world'.²²⁴

Members of the EZLN explained education themselves with the following words: "...it is an exchange, not just going there to teach something and only having it be a one-way thing. It is a horizontal exchange...Autonomous education is important because it gives knowledge and the motivation to continue being Zapatista, in organizing in that way."²²⁵

As a result, education and school are important in shaping the system, whether for continuing or ending the hegemony. Gramsci explained how education is used as both a coercive and non-coercive tool of the hegemony:

The coercive ones, which were basically the public institutions such as the government, police, armed forces and the legal system he regarded as the state or political society and the non-coercive ones were the others such as the churches, the schools, trade unions, political parties, cultural associations, clubs, the family etc. which he regarded as civil society. To some extent, *schools could fit into both categories*. Parts of school life are quite clearly coercive (compulsory education, the

²²⁴ Marta Harnecker, trans. Deniz Tuna, *Bir Hareket Yaratmak...* 191.

²²⁵ "Interview with Xochimilco Zapatista and Puente a la Esperanza Aide, Angelica and Victor," http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/mdfz_int_1.html#Anchor-Autonomous-3800, Accessed 17 March 2008.

national curriculum, national standards and qualifications) whilst others are not (the hidden curriculum).²²⁶

As education is so critical and strategic, this area cannot be left to the control of the hegemonic powers. Struggle and resistance must continue within education. One other aspect of education is the chance to create catalysts for change within society. These catalysts are intellectuals, but organic ones. Intellectuals have great potential for transforming society. Education is critical in creating these organic intellectuals, and organic intellectuals and mass society are essential in order to change the world and create a counter-hegemony. Gramsci saw the role of the intellectual as a crucial one in the context of creating a counter-hegemony. Also, he was quite clear that the transformation from capitalism to socialism required mass participation. For Gramsci, mass consciousness was essential and the role of the intellectual was crucial.²²⁷ Such an understanding of Gramsci fits well within the frameworks of both the MST and the EZLN. For them, the joining of the masses to the movement and the struggle is essential. They both emphasize the lack of masses within old movements. If there is to be a change, it must start from within the masses; the masses must be the main force. Furthermore, intellectuals from outside can help to transform society, but without organic intellectuals, it is impossible to finish the transformation. As has been seen since the beginning of the EZLN, the guerrillas who came to Chiapas for revolution did not come to take the vanguard role, but came to help the masses resist and struggle for a new world. Thus, the critical education and organic intellectuals that were emphasized in Gramsci's theory are also firmly based within these movements and their struggles.

The other critical part of the MST's and EZLN's theoretical bases is the ideas of Paulo Freire. Freire's theories, ideas and writings fulfill another area of the educational issue for these movements. Gramsci clarified why education is important. Freire provided the pedagogy of the education that these movements are using now. Because these movements are against the hegemony and its education, it would be nonsense to

²²⁶ B. Burke, "Antonio Gramsci, schooling and education," *the encyclopedia of informal education*, <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gram.htm>, Accessed 20 February 2008.

²²⁷ Burke, no page.

use the pedagogy and methods of the status quo. Therefore, Freire and his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, are important for these movements while they discover their way and work toward establishing a new society.

The MST and EZLN both established a new pedagogy based on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In both movements, pedagogy has praxis. The praxis of education is the combination of theory and the practice of these movements. Education is not separate from movement and its ideals. Education is part of movement. Education and movement develop together. Both affect each other. The main educational principle of this pedagogy is the movement itself, a movement that unites diverse pedagogies, and in a special way unites the pedagogy of social struggle with the pedagogy of the land and the pedagogy of history, each one helping to make an imprint on our identity or our *mística*.²²⁸

According to Freire, classical education understood the student-teacher relation as a one-way relation. The only information flow was from the teacher to the student. The student was an ineffective element of this process. Freire critiqued the dominant 'banking model of education,' which produced ignorant, powerless and passive students. Freire argued that education for a free and democratic society must involve the production of, as well as the transmission of, knowledge. His pedagogy centered on a dialogic, non-hierarchical relationship between teacher and pupil, which facilitated the process of socially and historically situated analysis of oppressive social structures and collective 'problem-solving.' The role of the educator was to support and facilitate learners in deconstructing or 'decoding' their worldviews and create new understandings and agency. He also argued that science should openly address the needs of the popular sector and that public planning should involve community participation.²²⁹ As Harnecker explained, this teaching method does not take people as though they were empty bottles to be filled; it is rather based on the idea that it is not only the teacher who knows, but

²²⁸ Roseli Saleté Caldart. "*Movement...*"

²²⁹ Nisha, 68.

that each person has his own specific knowledge and all these different knowledges have to be shared so that everyone can walk the educational path together.²³⁰

Freire's pedagogy is used to educate both educators and students. This new kind of pedagogy wants to form human beings who will be the protagonists of their own learning process, builders of their own understandings of the world. People ready to learn from each other enrich each other in their constant search.²³¹

The MST and EZLN were born from society, and education is also a reflection of societies. Education must teach people the history of movements, the resistance experiences of other people, practical skills for daily life and classical skills such as languages or sciences. What they learn is crucial for their lives. In classical education, people simply memorized what was given to them, often never to use it again. Freire clarified this issue and explained how to create a new education system and pedagogy capable of transforming society. It gives the necessary building materials to movements to enable them to struggle and discuss a new society.

Nobody educates anybody, nobody educates himself, and people educate themselves mutually, through their collective organization.²³² These words of Freire summarize the spirit of the pedagogy of the oppressed and critical education. The pedagogy of the movement takes shape in a dialogue with other educators, other students and other pedagogical movements.²³³ Cooperation and listening develop these movements' educational understanding, parallel to Freire's pedagogy. Without Freire, it would be impossible to fulfill Gramsci's abstract thoughts on education. The importance of education and the critical role of organic intellectuals in the struggle find shape within Freire's ideas. Freire's teachings on self-dignity, social responsibility, and breaking the

²³⁰ Harnecker, 193.

²³¹ Harnecker, 193.

²³² Harnecker, 203.

²³³ Roseli Salete Caldart. "*Movement...*"

cycle of oppression help people create positive change and build the life they want to live.²³⁴

As a last point on Freire's pedagogy, it should be stressed that these movements do not put a distance between themselves and the masses; their education is, in fact, the same. As Freire said, "none of the really freeing pedagogy ever treat the oppressed as hapless and give them models from the oppressors and put space between itself and oppressed."²³⁵ "Movement" means people and "people" means education. What the movement wants is the wishes of the people. Education cannot separate them from each other. Through education, people develop themselves and gain the tools and information needed to create a new society.

Gramsci and Freire influenced the MST and EZLN and shaped their ideas on education. These movements created a new pedagogy and education system that are parallel to the ideas of Gramsci and Freire. Two elements that are present in both Gramsci and Freire's writings are the use of the Marxist concept of praxis as the guiding principle of any educational activity and the emphasis on the need for intellectuals to become organically linked with the subaltern classes. For Gramsci and Freire, education is not only about knowledge production, but also about transforming the world.²³⁶ Freire emphasized this in the title of one of his books: *Literacy: Reading the Word and World*. The issue is not just to read and write, but also to apply this education to life. When there is a division or separation between theory and practice, the possibility of transforming the world and creating a new society is just an illusion. There should be a total linkage between theory and practice, and for this, there has to be praxis.

The MST and EZLN can attract much attention with the praxis in their movements. While there has been great criticism of old movements because of the gap between ideas and life, these two new movements have established a bridge between

²³⁴ Michelle Burkhardt, "In Brazil: Creating a New Reality," <http://www.yesmagazine.com/article.asp?ID=1261>, Accessed 17 February 2008.

²³⁵ Paulo Freire, trans. D. Hatipoğlu and E. Özbek, *Ezilenlerin Pedagojisi* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2006), 32.

²³⁶ Rodriguez, 17.

life, theory and movement. They build force from the real and practical needs of the people. Needs such as land, democratic rights and food inspire the people and are applied to educational practices. Gramsci and Freire opened the way and gave these movements a theoretical base. Because the MST and EZLN place so much emphasis on praxis, it would be nonsense if they merely talked about educational theory and did not strive to apply such concepts in their actions. In the next part of this thesis, the movements' educational experiences, achievements, successes and theories will be discussed.

5.3. Experiences and Achievements of the MST

Inspired by the ideas of Freire and Gramsci, the MST and EZLN developed their educational goals and succeeded at many things. In this section and the next, their successes and achievements will be discussed. Their schools, courses and curriculums and the content and aims of their educational systems will be examined.

The MST will be presented first because of its wider achievements, greater success and more firmly established system. The first MST school was established in the Encruzilhada Natalino camp in 1982 and it became legally recognized within two years.²³⁷ Today, 150,000 children attend elementary-level classes at 1,200 public schools, where 3,800 teachers work. Additionally, 1,200 MST educators are teaching literacy classes to 25,000 adults and youths.²³⁸ In a quarter century, the MST has brought education to a large number of people. While doing so, they also shaped their educational character. Education, the group believes, should be committed to the interests of the working and popular classes, available to everyone, in order to prepare people to take action as subjects of change, relate to working the land, develop the spirit of cooperation, learn and support humanist and socialist values, understand the

²³⁷ Harnacker, 184.

²³⁸ "MST Social Projects," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/summary.html>, Accessed 26 February 2008.

relationship between theory and social practice, and benefit from a socially useful curriculum with democratic management.²³⁹ In light of these educational principles, the MST educated its teachers and its teachers educated children and adults.

5.4. Educators, Teachers and other MST Heroes of Education

The MST has a national, residential training school in the village of Veranópolis, Iterra.²⁴⁰ The MST provides its own teacher-training courses and courses for administration of cooperatives here. In these courses, there are three main objectives:

- To train “educators for Agrarian Reform” and “active participants in the MST”;
- to train and qualify teachers to work in MST schools;
- and to develop both the general educational program of the MST and a specific program for rural workers’ schools.²⁴¹

Besides the courses at Iterra, the MST also gives different courses to prepare teachers and educators for the new pedagogy in cooperation with universities. Teacher-training courses are offered in partnership with the Federal University of Paraíba, the State University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Unijui and the Federal University of Espírito Santo.²⁴² These courses aim to prepare and educate teachers for primary and secondary schools in the MST camps. These courses are not just one-time events for educators; educators and teachers join these courses again and again, in different roles. In this way, they never cease to develop themselves or become old-fashioned or antiquated. They are always in progress, just as society is and just as the movement is.

Educators and teachers are preparing to educate people of movements for the struggle and resistance against the system. They are organic intellectuals of the

²³⁹ Kane, 99.

²⁴⁰ Kane, 100.

²⁴¹ R.S. Caldart, as quoted in Kane, 100.

²⁴² “MST Social Projects,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/summary.html>, Accessed 26 February 2008.

movements and will catalyze the change and preparation for a new society. In this preparation, there are some critical and unique pedagogical characteristics of MST education. These are:

- People are the greatest value produced and cultivated by the MST.
- People are educated by learning to *be*.
- People are educated in the actions they perform and the works they produce.
- People are educated by producing and reproducing culture.
- People are educated by living values.
- People are educated by learning how to solve problems.
- People are educated by learning from the past to plan for the future.
- People are educated in collectivities.
- The educator educates by conduct.²⁴³

Despite the fact that the MST gives so much importance to the training of educators and teachers, the movement still holds to the idea that education cannot be reduced to the mere role of an educator or teacher. As was said above, “Nobody educates anybody, nobody educates himself, and people educate themselves mutually, through their collective organization.” Education is a collective thing. Education is mutual. Education is a dialogue, not a monologue. Because of this, students in MST schools are active participants of a new education and pedagogy. Without the students, education in the MST would be incomplete, far from creating a new society and similar to hegemonic educations which aim only for the survival of the system. As is taught by Freire’s pedagogy, students must be subjects, not be objects, in the education process. There should be an understanding of a dialogue in which the teacher can be a student and the student can be a teacher. If there is a one-way information flow, there is something wrong. In such education, only one type of consumer and worker can be educated for the system. The change of the system depends on the people’s belief that they can change something and give something to other people. This understanding can

²⁴³ Roseli Salete Caldart. “*Movement...*”

only grow from an education in which Freire's pedagogy is applied. Students play a very important role in this process, and because of this, MST schools are places where students can express everything freely.

The MST is aware that children, youths and even adult students can contribute to education and help develop the process. As the children remind the MST, there is no education without games and play, which can also be thought of as collective action-producing works.²⁴⁴ Students are also influencing and guiding part of their own education. They help to decide what should be included in the curriculum, to organize free time and to address other issues that affect schooling and education.

Students also learned to coordinate their own activities and choose their representatives and secretary of the school. They prepare for self-organization. Without needing someone else's help or guidance, they develop the habit of collective behavior and leadership from the beginning of their educations. Students also decide upon the rules to which they should agree. Someone who has graduated from such an educational system would never let others decide things for him or her, or guide his or her own struggle and resistance. Furthermore, students do not just receive theoretical educations, but also practical ones. They are responsible for the cleaning of the school, watering of plant, distribution of pencils and other such age-appropriate tasks.²⁴⁵

Students who educate themselves both theoretically and practically for life are also ready for the struggle of the movement. They learn what is normally taught in state schools, but also learn the practical knowledge that they need in their daily lives and information about their movements. For example, 1,000 youths recently got together for 10 days to attend an intensive course taught thanks to a partnership with 3 Brazilian Universities (Pará, Juiz de Fora and Campinas). During those 10 busy days, they studied Brazilian history, the fight for land and other themes directly related to their age group.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Roseli Salete Caldart. "*Movement...*"

²⁴⁵ Harnecker, 198.

²⁴⁶ "MST Social Projects," <http://www.mstbrazil.org/summary.html>, Accessed 26 February 2008.

The MST's educational goal is not just to break the monopoly of the teacher in the educational process, but also to include every aspect of society within education. The students' role has been explained above. Older members of the movement can also join the educational process. They can support the schools with their experiences and knowledge. They can help by assisting with the administrative issues of the school or auditing it. If something goes wrong, they have to right to inquire about it and to help to fix the problem. Also, people join meetings and seminars in which they can present their ideas and give advice on pedagogy and other educational issues.

The success of this educational system is closely related to the fact that everyone joins in the process. Teachers, students, society, leaders of the movement and other supporters such as academicians all offer support to education. They have developed a new pedagogy for a new society. This pedagogy is the common product of everyone, just as the movement itself is built on all people's efforts and struggles. The MST has learned to value every person who is a part of its organization, and therefore it has defined human development as one of its main priorities.²⁴⁷ The movement found its meaning in the landless people and education has taught the people their own value. Education lets this idea of value instill itself in movement and in everyone's mind, inspiring them to struggle and resist for a new world in which everyone will be special, not subject to collective behavior and leadership. Through such an education, everyone learns to be not just a customer and worker for the system, but rather to be an individual and part of a collective body.

Finally, the decision-making process in education is a good example of how the MST movement creates democracy from within and develops itself for a new society. First, the "general assembly" is composed of all the members of the community; it meets once or twice a year and discusses and approves the overall plan for the school as well as other significant or controversial matters. Opportunities for participation by community members include working on projects for school improvements, helping to maintain the memory of the struggle, inviting teachers to take part in community events, giving technical help to the school, contributing skills to the school, using the school space for

²⁴⁷ Roseli Saleté Caldart. "*Movement...*"

meetings and courses and adopting the school as a part of the community. In primary and secondary schools, the “education team” is composed of a representative number of teachers, pupils and community members; it meets monthly. This is known as a “school council,” whereby it is legally possible for the school to be managed collectively through the participation of students and the community. This is the body that is responsible for overall planning and implementation. Third, the “teachers’ collective” involves all the teachers, and usually meets once a week to organize the day-to-day running of the school, including lesson-planning, special activities and the cross-curricular themes of study. Fourth, the “pupils’ collectives” contribute to the overall planning and organize tasks for which the pupils have responsibility, such as operation of the school pharmacy, meals or assemblies.²⁴⁸

5.5. Other MST Educational Practices

Primary and secondary schools in MST camps are just one part of the movement’s educational activities. Schools are organized with the cooperation of teachers, students, parents of students, members of the movement and the collective leadership of the movement. Everyone works for improved educational conditions. However, the ordinary schools for children are not enough to truly transform the people and develop the movement. These schools educate only one part of the society. Meanwhile, there are uneducated adults, high percentages of illiteracy and a lack of information on political, theoretical and practical issues. For these reasons, the movement also provides many adult courses and different educational activities.

One important initiative is the TAC. Its aim is to help people in settlements survive economically. The course centers on “co-operative firm management,” mixes “education” with technical “training” and seeks to promote the growth of organic intellectuals within the MST.²⁴⁹ These courses help improve the quality of life in the

²⁴⁸ Nisha, 188-189.

²⁴⁹ Kane, 102.

settlements. Occupation of land is only the first step. If people cannot develop in a cooperative body in these settlements and establish strong economic bases, the result will again be the same, and they will return to being landless peasants. As a result, people are educated on cooperative issues and learn the technical skills that they need to run the settlement. The six main areas of focus in these courses are:

- Technical skills related to general administration;
- Political/pedagogical/ideological issues, to encourage class-consciousness among workers and consideration of their educational role in the settlements;
- Pedagogical skills and techniques;
- Ethics: humanist and socialist values for new society;
- Skills related to organizing and running a co-operative;
- and technical skills related to agricultural and agro-industrial matters.²⁵⁰

As can be understood from the above focus areas, these courses are not just designed to educate people on technical and economic issues of cooperatives, but also give people a political and ideological education for the new society. If they are only educated about how to maintain a cooperative, then how is the movement any different from hegemonic power, which uses education for economic purposes? While the movement educates people for economic survival and continuation of the settlement, it also gives them hope and education for a new society.

Another MST course is organized for local grassroots leaders. Grassroots leaders have mostly only received a weak primary education. Because of this, they now always have one foot in education. Grassroots leaders do not stop their education or their personal development after they become a head of collective leadership. The MST is a movement because it always moves. Conservatism and ignoring the voice of the people are not characteristics of the movement. As a result, it always moves, develops and educates itself more and more, just as the grassroots leaders and local leaders do. Leadership training involves considerable travel to acquire a broader, national perspective on the struggle, and includes the organization of campaigning events such as

²⁵⁰ Cerioli, as quoted in Kane, 102.

“17th of April”²⁵¹ march.²⁵² In this way, leaders can see a wider picture of Brazil and the world. They are not stuck in their home settlements. As are all the members of the movement, leaders are also educated in preparation for the new people and society.

Moreover, the MST gives literacy courses to young people and adults. Some of them might already know how to write and read a little, but it is important to develop their skill levels so they can more easily join the collective body and decision-making mechanism. As a result of these courses, illiterate people are encouraged to study and are better integrated into the movement, and a more democratic leadership and society becomes visible. Another adult course was established in 1996 for health technicians.²⁵³

The MST works hard to develop education within the movement. Members always develop new projects in accordance with their aim and the importance of education in the movement. One of these projects was the Florestan Fernandes National School. Wanting to develop social and political training and “intensify studies and research on the reality they are building,” the MST created the Florestan Fernandes National School in the Guarema Municipality, São Paulo. The courses last for two and a half months of intensive study; they are designed for militants who are still in training. These people receive basic knowledge about the MST and its history, political history of Brazil, history of the struggle for the land, history of revolutions, struggles in Latin America and introductions to philosophy, economy and sociology.²⁵⁴

The MST tries to solve every interior problem with the joint discussion of the people. However, in some cases, conditions do not make this possible. For now, the MST cannot provide education at the higher levels, such as at the university level. However, the movement does need people who have completed a university education. Therefore, the MST tries to make it possible for individual students to enter university. More than 100 MST students are attending several Brazilian universities, in addition to

²⁵¹ On 17 April 1996, the military police killed 19 rural workers during a peaceful march in the state of Para (<http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/brazil/mst1.html>, Accessed 30 March 2008.).

²⁵² Kane, 102.

²⁵³ Harnecker, 208.

²⁵⁴ Marta Harnecker, 210.

those attending classes thanks to a partnership with a private university. There are also 25 MST medicine students at the Escuela Latino-Americana in Cuba. Several children of settlers have received higher education and now work with the MST as lawyers, journalists, teachers, researchers and agronomists.²⁵⁵

Furthermore, as stated above, various courses are given in cooperation with universities, using the university facilities. For example, “during 1998-99, CONCRAB signed an agreement with Iterra and the universities of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos) in San Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, and with the University of Brasilia (UNB), to create a course for Specialization and Extension of Cooperative Administration, in order to graduate settlers and technicians from the SCA.”²⁵⁶ At present, this course is offered by agreement with the University of Brasilia, the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), ISP and Iterra. There are also teaching courses available for the MST teachers, by agreement with the University of Unijui (Rio Grande do Sul), the Federal University at Paraiba, the Federal University of Espirito Santo, the State University of Mato Grosso, the Federal University of Para, the Federal University of Juiz de Fora and the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ).²⁵⁷

All these educational programs, courses and schools have made the MST unique and given it a chance to change something in this world and to influence others to act more like its members. Every aspect of MST practice is shaped by the desire to politicize, raise critical awareness and encourage the emergence of “subjects” of change.²⁵⁸ The MST established its own pedagogy and educational process with the aim of social change, based on the works of Freire, Gramsci and other revolutionary theoreticians. The teachers at Veranópolis have said that Paulo Freire’s example and

²⁵⁵ “MST Social Projects,” <http://www.mstbrazil.org/summary.html>, Accessed 26 February 2008.

²⁵⁶ Harnecker, 210

²⁵⁷ Harnecker, 210-211.

²⁵⁸ Kane, 104.

ideas are of major importance in the hopeful work that they are doing.²⁵⁹ The MST's educational project is a project of liberation, cultural resistance and transformation, building a more radically participatory democratic society.²⁶⁰

As the MST strives to transform society, it provides education based on the following principles:

- Educate taking reality as a starting point. "School must teach how to read, write, and analyze reality – both local and general – and teach through practice."
- Teacher and student are comrades who work together, learning and teaching each other: there are no teachers who know everything, nor students who must receive this knowledge passively.
- Education must prepare the student for manual and intellectual work.
- Education must recover and encourage values such as solidarity, comradeship, collective work, responsibility and love for people's causes.
- Education must assume the person's integral development. The main aim, as we said, is to form "a new man and a new woman, for a new society and a new world."
- School organizations must create the conditions necessary for the children and young people to develop in every direction.²⁶¹

Based on these principles, with the coexistence of practice and theory that is praxis, to achieve the democratic and humanitarian aims of the new people and the new society the MST will continue to provide education and develop itself in this area. From the beginning, education has been very important for the movement so that it can educate its members and develop itself for a more fair society. The MST has come a long way to guarantee the rights of its people, not only the right to quality rural education, but also the right to its own proposed educational system, in line with the aims of its struggle. In spite of the obstacles it has had to overcome – not so much for

²⁵⁹ Patrick Brantlinger, *Faculty Activism: Utopian Universities and International Activism*, <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2005/SO/Feat/bran.htm>, Accessed 10 May 2008.

²⁶⁰ Nisha, 183.

²⁶¹ Harnecker, 194.

lack of resources as for the barriers put up by the government – the MST has won important battles, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. It has consolidated its efforts to define a proposal for education in a critical and participative way for the formation of the new man. The emphasis placed by the MST on education is undoubtedly part of the solid base for its future development and gives it, as a social movement, a much broader and all-embracing dimension.²⁶²

5.6. Experiences and Achievements of the EZLN

The EZLN has also given great importance to education from its beginning and has achieved many things in this area that parallel the successes of the MST. In their opposition to the neoliberal system, education for all indigenous children was one of the Zapatistas' specific demands.²⁶³ As was stated above, from the very first days of 1994 and the armed uprising, the EZLN has emphasized the conditions of education in Chiapas, the importance of education in general and the urgency of addressing these issues. Subcomandante Marcos described these conditions in a 1992 essay entitled "Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds A Storm and a Prophecy," which was quoted above.

When compared to the MST, the EZLN has achieved relatively fewer educational successes. Perhaps this is no surprise, given the EZLN's relatively short existence and the daily pressures of its struggle with the state.²⁶⁴ This does not mean that they have failed to do anything about education; it simply means that, when compared to the impressive accomplishments of the MST, they have achieved less. Like the MST, the EZLN based its understanding of education on the ideas of Freire and Gramsci. Indigenous culture has also been helpful to the EZLN in establishing its movement and

²⁶² Harnecker, 217.

²⁶³ Leanne Reinke, "Globalisation and Local Indigenous Education in Mexico," *International Review of Education* 50 no. 5-6 (2004), 490.

²⁶⁴ Kane, 132.

educational system. Creating of organic intellectual through a new pedagogy who will force people to change the world, culture of indigenous also explains what they understand from education and why they focused on this issue too much.

After the ceasefire on 16 January 1994, access to education for the neo-Zapatista's children became one of the top priorities of the movement. The EZLN had had its own educational structures before 1994; however, these were restricted to the formation of political cadres. The political training of cadres took two months and access to these courses was only possible via an officer's recommendation.²⁶⁵ It was in 1996 that the first schools for communities' children were created, and the effort to create a school for every community has been ongoing ever since.²⁶⁶ In these schools, educators, or, as they called in the EZLN, "promoters," students and the whole community joined the educational process and tried to develop it, just as the MST had been doing since 1996 when the first school was established. These first neo-Zapatista schools were built in the communities where the *Aguascalientes* cultural centers²⁶⁷ were located: La Realidad, Oventik, Morelia, La Garrucha and Roberto Barrios.²⁶⁸ In twelve years, the movement has never stopped this process and continues to develop its educational sector. As a representative from Caracol I²⁶⁹ describes:

We've created 72 new autonomous schools, and trained 20 educational promoters. These 20 promoters then in turn trained another 80 promoters, becoming the first generation of our autonomous education.

²⁶⁵ Carlos Imaz, as quoted in Rodriguez, 74.

²⁶⁶ Rodriguez, 5.

²⁶⁷ "Aguascalientes," named in honor of the Aguascalientes Convention of 1914, where the leading revolutionary factions, including followers of Zapata, Villa and Carranza, met to discuss how they would govern the country. These sites had served as political and cultural centers and meeting places between the Zapatistas and the outside world for nine years (<http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2499>, Accessed 4 April 2008.).

²⁶⁸ Rodriguez, 66.

²⁶⁹ Caracoles are the civilian governments and health, education, sports, political and gathering centers for the Zapatista movement. There are five caracoles in Chiapas, one caracol for each of the five geographic and ethnic zones of the state (<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/english/resources/faq-about-zapatismo.html#Promoters>, Accessed 17 April 2008.).

We are now in the 3rd generation of promoters and have 147 promoters working with 1,726 students.²⁷⁰

5.7. Autonomous Communities and Promoters of Education

Autonomous communities created their own educational systems as an alternative hegemony. These communities appointed the educators and determined the curriculum of the schools. This education is a result of dialogue and communication between everyone in the movement. Armed guerrillas of the EZLN, Zapatista leadership and the rest of society has joined and developed the education system within the movement. This collective decision-making process is similar to that of the MST and feeds from the education process itself.

The EZLN and its members place importance on education, but education has always been very important for the indigenous people of Mexico and Chiapas. Clear evidence of this could be seen at the Congress of San Cristobal in 1974. Ten years before the EZLN began to prepare and twenty years before it acted, the importance of education was already being emphasized in the area. The indigenous peoples chose to organize their discussion at the Congress around four issues: land, commerce, education and health. The various groups agreed on a number of demands with regard to education, which included the following:

We want Indian teachers trained to teach in our language and according to our custom, and that can also teach Spanish. We do not want teachers who do not know our language and customs. We want teachers who will respect the communities and their customs. We want them to teach us our rights as citizens. We want the community to be taught its rights.²⁷¹

With the EZLN's guidance, autonomous municipalities were established and communities started or continued to work on education. As the movement and as a

²⁷⁰ Amber Howard, "Refusing Government Money...."

²⁷¹ John Womack, Jr., *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 160.

movement, the people are aware that they need a different education than the state's system of education. It was only after the ceasefire and with the creation of the neo-Zapatista autonomous municipalities that the communities first discussed a plan to create an autonomous educational system for the children.²⁷² The neo-Zapatista school system was an initiative of the communities and they relied on the municipal autonomous government and on some civil society organizations to fulfill their plans.²⁷³ Acceptance of the education program took more than one year. The proposal was discussed by communities, professionals and civil society, and at last the communities approved its final design. With the approval of the education program, some changes were introduced into the organizational formation of the communities and municipalities. Each community now has an education committee and a permanent position in the Good Government Councils for regional education.²⁷⁴

The Good Government Councils, as a reflection of the people's power and cooperative decisions, achieved many things for local education. The Good Government Councils have provided resources to develop local infrastructure. The main investments have gone toward the construction of schools and library buildings, and the acquisition of educational materials such as notebooks, pens or pencils.²⁷⁵ Schools and libraries were constructed in Rancho Nuevo, Nuevo Horizonte and Plan de Guadalupe with the help of the councils. From the beginning, communities worked together for better education and for a higher quality of promoters. For example, people in each community worked for the promoters or gave them food. Promoters do not receive money for their work; their needs are filled by community, which might give them food or donate a day's work each month. As was seen above, everyone in the community gives something or does something to help develop the conditions of local education. They also take an active part in the education process.

²⁷² Rodriguez, 74.

²⁷³ Rodriguez, 76.

²⁷⁴ Rodriguez, 76.

²⁷⁵ Rodriguez, 77.

Communities choose the promoters, decide what they will be taught and take part in designing the curriculum. One of the most important parts of education is the teachers. New education and new pedagogy requires a new type of teachers. Old-style teachers with old-fashioned ideas cannot inspire a revolution or any change within society. Therefore, educating teachers and supporting them to create a new society is very important. Transformation of the society can only be possible with a change in education: new pedagogy and curriculum. The EZLN solved this first problem by relying on promoters who are local, unpaid and working out of their own desire to raise the consciousness of their home communities.²⁷⁶ Educational promoters are volunteers selected by the autonomous, indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico, to provide instruction in Zapatista schools. These men and women make great sacrifices to teach both children and adults in their communities and in Zapatista civilian educational centers.²⁷⁷ A member of a Zapatista community explains why the teachers are called “promoters”: “They are called promoters because they go to the communities and promote education, promote knowledge and growing, sharing that. But it is an exchange, not just going there to teach something and only having it be a one-way thing. It is a horizontal exchange.”²⁷⁸

These promoters of education are organic intellectuals of the community and they have important roles in raising more organic intellectuals for the movement. Promoters of education are responding to the needs and demands of communities. The community prefers these promoters, not the government teachers. The government teachers are reproducers of the existing system and do not know the language and culture of the indigenous people. As representatives from Caracol IV said,

²⁷⁶ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

²⁷⁷ “Education Promoter Trainings,” <http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/english/projects/schools-of-hope/education-promoters.html>, Accessed 16 April 2008.

²⁷⁸ “Interview with Xochimilco Zapatista and Puente a la Esperanza Aide, Angelica and Victor,” http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/mdfz_int_1.html#Anchor-Autonomous-3800, Accessed 17 March 2008.

The government teachers were not teaching about our own culture and our own language. So we as a community and as parents began to organize ourselves through meetings with other Zapatistas to plan the Other Education. From these meetings, we agreed to take our children out of the government schools and to name our own promoters of education.²⁷⁹

These promoters are trained by professionals. Teachers from Mexico City trained the first generation of men and women that would become the first local education promoters. During this first training, four subjects were taught: mathematics, languages, life and environment and histories.²⁸⁰ The training lasted six months, and then those who were trained would turn around and train another generation of local promoters from their own communities. It is important to note that these promoters are learning alongside their students. It is not the type of education where the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing. Rather, the teachers are promoters, people from within the community committed to promoting different types of work and knowledge.²⁸¹

Over the years, many education promoters were taught and started to work in the schools of the autonomous communities. In these communities, promoters educated students and the community in a mutual way. They taught something, but also learned many things from the experiences and knowledge of students and the people of the communities. They recognize that everyone is still learning; the promoter is merely someone who facilitates a learning environment.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Amber Howard, "Refusing Government Money...."

²⁸⁰ Rodriguez, 76.

²⁸¹ Amber Howard, "Refusing Government Money...."

²⁸² "Towards the Intergalactic: Reportbacks from the Gathering of Zapatistas and the Peoples of the World," <http://www.masn.org.au/content/view/73/46/>, Accessed 16 April 2008.

5.8. Other Education Issues in the EZLN

The EZLN announced its Other Campaign in the summer of 2005, as was explained above. The EZLN primarily developed the Other Campaign for political reasons, but it also had implications for education, health and other areas. Merely changing politics and creating new politics is not enough to change society and transform the world for the better. Therefore, promoters and members of the EZLN developed a new educational understanding under the label of “Other Education.” On 31 December 2006, thousands of Zapatistas and visitors from throughout Mexico and the world met in the mountain town of Oventic for the Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples and the Peoples of the World, where an entire session was dedicated to “The Other Education.” The Other Education is based on the construction of a new world, with values of being, not of having.²⁸³ Comandante Concepcion from Caracol IV summarized the Other Education in these words:

Education here is our own. As Zapatistas, we began to organize ourselves here in our territory, and it has caused us problems. But it’s just not the same, the education that the government gives, and we began to realize this. They forced us to learn whatever they wanted, and we began to resist. The education they were giving to our children wasn’t good. We had to make the change, to create the Other Education.²⁸⁴

Other Education is a way to create a new world. The education of the state only serves the existing system and neoliberal capitalism. Receiving such education, it is clear that children can only become customers and, if they are lucky, find a job for themselves and their families. Representatives Lucio and Magdalena explained the outcome of government education well: “Because of the poor quality of government education, we have begun to create our own. The model of education from the

²⁸³ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

²⁸⁴ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

government served only to destroy the mother earth and all of humanity, to develop studies favoring the interests of those in power.”²⁸⁵

The Other Education teaches children how to create and be a functional part of a new society. It is obvious that everything will not change in a single day, but the EZLN takes things step by step, giving communities time to change and develop. It is important to note what is being taught to children during this process. There are four main areas in Other Education:

- **Languages:** the autonomous education promoters teach in the indigenous languages, with Spanish taught as a second language.
- **Math:** lessons include practical skills, such as calculating your land area so as not to get cheated by agrarian reform officials.
- **Life sciences (Agro-Ecology):** lessons emphasize agronomy, uses of local plants, and protection of natural resources and environment (as opposed to commercial “development”).
- **History:** lessons emphasize revolutionary heroes, popular struggles, community history (including the recent past of exploitation and abuse at the hands of landowners on the fincas), and the Zapatista demands for liberty, justice, and democracy.²⁸⁶

Students learn about ways to provide for their communities.²⁸⁷ Education that is merely theoretical or designed for economic purposes does not allow children to become active members of the movement or community, or “vanguards” of the new society. Life sciences courses also teach students to take care of the environment through practices of organic agriculture and rejection of trans-genetic seeds, among other methods.²⁸⁸ While research on this topic and on the importance of organic agriculture is generally emphasized, it is important that the EZLN also deals with this issue in its

²⁸⁵ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

²⁸⁶ “Support Autonomous Education In Zapatista Communities,” <http://people.emich.edu/rstahler/education-project.pdf>, Accessed 17 April 2008.

²⁸⁷ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

²⁸⁸ Amber Howard, “Refusing Government Money....”

schools. History courses teach not only about the hegemonic powers, wars and victories, but also about ordinary people and their struggles and resistance. The histories of local and worldwide resistances influence the students and give them power in their own struggles. They also have a chance to learn their mother language along with Spanish, which is not possible at state schools. Finally, math is used to show how praxis is totally engraved in the movement and in their lives.

The education department of the EZLN is organized under the General Coordination of the Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Education System of National Liberation of the Highlands of Chiapas (CGSERAZLN). Its motto is “EDUCATION IN RESISTANCE, THIS IS OUR SCIENCE!! NOT HAVING EDUCATION IS LIKE BEING DEAD!! EDUCATION CANNOT BE DETACHED FROM THE STRUGGLES OF THE PEOPLE OF PLANET EARTH!!”²⁸⁹

EZLN education can be divided into three parts. First are the Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Primary Schools (EPRAZ). These primary schools are already functioning in the communities of resistance and they form a part of the community’s autonomy just as much as the other levels of education do. They are already an established reality and form part of the basic education of all the Zapatista peoples.²⁹⁰ The next level of education is the Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Secondary Schools (ESRAZ). These schools are autonomous; they do not depend on the official government for support. It is a school of the Zapatista people and the peoples of the entire world, built with the support of all those who stand in solidarity with them.²⁹¹

The final level of education is not for Zapatista communities but rather for the other people of world who are also in resistance. It is known as Zapatista Language School (CELMRAZ) . Here, language courses are given in Spanish and Tsotsil. The Language Center is a space for exchange and communication with diverse peoples and

²⁸⁹ “Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Education System of National Liberation of The Highlands of Chiapas,” <http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/index.html>, Accessed 18 April 2008.

²⁹⁰ “Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Primary Schools EPRAZ,” <http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/epraz.html>, Accessed 18 April 2008.

²⁹¹ “Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Secondary Schools ESRAZ,” <http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/esraz.html>, Accessed 18 April 2008.

cultures of the world. Learning Tsotsil and Spanish is a concrete form of this exchange because the classes are offered in a context of the reality of the indigenous people in resistance. The activities offered are part of an educational and cultural exchange and are given in reciprocity for the economic support that foreign brothers and sisters offer to the school.²⁹²

In these schools, Other Education and autonomous education find a shape for an alternative society and a new humanity. It would be ridiculous if the rules of the existing system were applied to this new educational framework. In the neo-Zapatista educational system, there are no grades; therefore, competition to gain cultural capital does not exist.²⁹³ Education is not for creating human power for capital. The aim is to develop community and benefit the movement. The capitalist system wants students transformed into valuable inputs for production. It gives value and people earn money in the system based on their education and grades. As a result, the EZLN prefers not to create such differences among its students because its education system does not prepare a labor force for capitalism but rather educates students for a new society.

While they are forming their own unique schools, it is no surprise that they are preparing their own educational materials, as well. Urban intellectuals have created most of the EZLN's manuals and reading materials. Education promoters are at liberty to use the prepared texts or any additional materials that they consider pertinent for achieving their educational goals.²⁹⁴ Each community can decide on the materials to be used according to their local needs and opportunities. A local Zapatista, Gustavo, summarizes this very well: "There is no standard, no book that can be written about the right way to educate around the world. Each community is different. We will continue to learn, to share our ways with the people who come to listen."²⁹⁵

²⁹² "Language Center," <http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/celm.html>, Accessed 18 April 2008.

²⁹³ Rodriguez, 81.

²⁹⁴ Rodriguez, 77.

²⁹⁵ Amber Howard, "Refusing Government Money...."

5.9. Conclusion

The EZLN and the MST were both influenced by the ideas and theories of Gramsci and Freire and have established an educational system for their movements that is also impacted by their own communities, cultures and historical experiences. A desire to transform society and create new humans has become the main inspiration of these movements. This transformation can become possible with the unification and support of a whole community that is linked to the movement. The people will be the source of the intellectuals who will walk, resist and struggle with the communities. The “vanguard” role is not filled by someone who comes from another region or country, but by the local people who resist for their lands and cultures. As Gramsci pointed out, organic intellectuals are essential for the transformation of society. Educating people and creating organic intellectuals becomes possible with the pedagogy of Freire. Freire claimed that because of the hegemonic power and its education and pedagogy, society cannot find a way to transform itself. As a result, the MST and the EZLN aim to develop organic intellectuals with a different pedagogy.

The main importance of education is that the government, state or hegemonic powers use it to pacify society. Schools demand the most passive response from those groups in society who are the most oppressed by the economic and political system, and allow the most active participation and learning from those who are the least likely to want change. This is logical approach for preserving the status quo.²⁹⁶ While schools and formal education still have such aims, it is impossible to transform society. Therefore, these new movements focus heavily on education and strive to meet the needs of their people, who generally cannot access formal education on their own.

Their educational systems are parallel to their aims. These movements do not aim to seize state power. They never aim to have power. Their aim is to give power to the people. People must govern themselves. Collective leadership, leading by obeying and democratic organization are the main characteristics of these movements. Through

²⁹⁶ Martin Carnoy, *Education ...* 19.

education, these ideas are transmitted to the people. The union of the people and of active student participants in class is a direct goal. The movements have also prepared curricula and educational materials in discussion with intellectuals and with the local people. The education is for people and their needs, not for power or the orders of the hegemony. Through this education, the transformation of society is possible, without aiming to have power, but to be power as whole society.

The MST and EZLN can influence others and become a vanguard of new change in a new century. Their experiences and ideas can be applied to other countries or other resistance and struggle movements. Being power without taking power will be possible, as they claimed. In the conclusion, these ideas will be discussed and the place of these movements in modern struggles will be observed.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

First and foremost, this thesis has aimed to attract attention to the MST and the EZLN. Despite the lively resistance atmosphere in Latin America and the growing importance and potential of these movements for their countries and continent, they have not found sufficient room in academic discussions in Turkey. There are few reviews and journals analysing the MST and the EZLN and only a few books.

This thesis has argued that the MST and EZLN's non-hierarchical, participatory and democratic features are related to their understandings of power. The MST and EZLN fight to be power without taking power. Overthrowing the state, becoming a new government or getting separated from Mexico is out of question for the EZLN. These special features of the movements and their relation to power are best exemplified in their understanding and practice of education. Therefore, this thesis has first showed the source of the movements' features by analyzing Brazil, Mexico and international conditions. Then the movements' own histories have been searched for clues about their power practices and unique qualities. Educational practice is discussed as the best example of "being power" without taking power.

During the pessimistic atmosphere of the 1990s, some political parties, organizations and different social movements, including the MST and EZLN, still believed in an alternative and had the power to work towards it. The people cried out in this decade that "another world is possible," and the Seattle, Genoa and Prague demonstrations and the World Social Forum were cornerstones of this cry. The WSF was not the only such event, and many other demonstrations and voices accompanied it.

The MST and EZLN came to prominence because of their different tactics and experiences that formed their uniqueness. This thesis has explored the possibility that these movements could be true alternatives and replace past real socialist experiences. Throughout this analysis, the historical background and influential ideas and events of these movements have been analyzed together with the global, national and local developments. The thesis has examined neoliberalism, political party strategies, religion

and legal codes as national causes of resistance. The importance of national and local factors comes from their ability to explain why such movements have arisen in Latin America but not elsewhere, though people suffer from the effects of neoliberalism around the globe. Therefore, repeating or applying the tactics of the MST or the EZLN in other nations would probably not be successful. However, this does not mean that these movements are not important or that other movements cannot learn from their experiences. More importantly, it is probably better to not to try to repeat the experiences of others exactly. Classical revolutionary movements used to organize themselves like the parties of the real socialisms, or guerillas in Cuba or along Mao's Chinese experience. Repetitions of such events would not become successful today. So as the MST and the EZLN have emphasized, everyone should root themselves in their own people and history and then draw their road-map with an eye toward global solidarity. Leaders and movements need to be with their people, not just near their people, not separate from their people and not even behind their people.

The thesis has presented a general history of the MST and EZLN. The preparation era, armed uprising, peace negotiations, marches and autonomous municipalities of the EZLN were explained together with the first occupations, encampments, cooperatives, marches and educational experiences of the MST. From these experiences, other movements can take lessons and avoid repeating the same mistakes. One of the main ways that the MST and EZLN can help other resistance movements is by emphasizing how their own experiences, organization and power are closely interlinked with the people. Any movement in any different part of world could learn, at the very least, that resistance and struggle is possible under any conditions and that it is still possible to create an alternative system.

Finally, these movements' educational experiences have been analyzed and the possibility of their being power or delivering an alternative system has been examined. What they have achieved under the influence of whom, and what they have aimed to further accomplish, have all been explained in this final section. As this thesis has argued, the main goals of the MST and EZLN have been to create alternative power practices and transform society without taking power. Education has been at the center

of this transformation. New social movements should establish their educational practices early on and start to fight for a new society. Here, the experiences of the MST and EZLN can help significantly. However, as mentioned before applying them wholesale in other geographies would probably end in disasters. The lesson here for other movements is not to attempt to repeat these stories in their entirety, but rather to take the idea of alternative education and find ways to create their own, locally-focused educational practices. The search for these local practices could be the topic of another thesis.

One of the main questions of this thesis has been whether the MST and the EZLN can truly provide alternative social practices to capitalist society. In Wallerstein's words, "Was the Zapatista insurrection a success? The only answer is in the apocryphal story about the answer that Zhou En-lai is supposed to have given to the question: 'What do you think of the French Revolution?' Answer: 'It is too early to tell.'"²⁹⁷

The MST and EZLN have provided the hope to struggle for an alternative system. They can be much like the real socialist experiences of the USSR, China, Albania or Yugoslavia and the guerilla warfare of Cuba or Nicaragua in terms of aspiration. Just like these examples inspired people during the Cold War, the MST and EZLN can inspire people now, but in different ways. However, it is still too early to say whether they could replace the old examples and provide a new alternative. First, the MST and EZLN do not aim to do such a thing. They have never presented them as vanguard forces. They do not tell people to blindly follow them or apply their strategy to other struggles. They do not claim that their way is the only way. Their strategy is not to lead people, but rather to come together with people, listen to them and act with them. They are a movement because they move. The most important thing is to be with people and walk with them for a better society. The true issue is not the target, the aim or the transformation, but rather the continuity, to keep walking.

If it is necessary to describe these movements and their roles in the struggle against neoliberal hegemony, they are symptoms for the modern day. Their duty is not to

²⁹⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, "What have the Zapatistas Accomplished," *Commentary* No. 224 (Jan 2008).

develop themselves as model to be followed, but rather to protect themselves as a branch to hold, encouraging others to act as well.²⁹⁸ This is the true importance of the MST and EZLN. They are reference points for others. It is true that their experiences are not as large as those of the Soviets, Cubans or Chinese were during the Cold War. They cannot create such levels of fear that those old socialist practices had created for the capitalist hegemonic powers. However, they do keep the idea of resistance alive for people. The MST and the EZLN show that it is still possible to resist and struggle under any conditions. It is still possible to resist in a country where the military government has harshly destroyed opposition, or where a one-party government did not allow the voice of the opposition to speak. It is still possible to resist in a world where neoliberalism and neoliberal policies are accepted as god-given and any other system but capitalism is seen as childish, even foolish. Even under these conditions, the MST and EZLN claimed that another world, society and life were possible. They worked to make this real. They established encampments and autonomous municipalities. In these settlements, they organized life, established democratic rules, developed an economic life and founded schools and clinics. In other parts of the world, other movements should carefully analyze these experiences and ask themselves how they might achieve similar things within their own historical specific conditions. Other movements should obviously develop their own resistance and struggle experiences. Only by looking back with clarity and taking relevant lessons from people's struggles will it be possible to move persistently towards the new society that people have been dreaming about.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Ramirez, 369.

²⁹⁹ Gustava Estava, "The Meaning and Scope of the Struggle for Autonomy," Latin American Studies Association (Guadalajara, Mexico). 18 April 1997.

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