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Social Movements, Hegemony, and New Forms of Resistance

Harry E. Vanden

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least in provisional stages) unification in the historical activity of these groups. . . . It therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success.

—Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

The emergence of new political and alternative movements despite their scant participation in [traditional] political life marks the start of a new way of conducting politics which responds to the legitimate demands of the marginalized majorities.

—Juan del Grandó, mayor of La Paz, greeting the rise of the new political movement MAS and its then leader and Coca Growers Federation head, Evo Morales

THE MASSES have resisted elitist rule in Latin America in a variety of ways. Since the initial rebellions by the native peoples against imposed European rule there have been innumerable uprisings and other forms of resistance led by the exploited masses themselves in Latin America. With the notable exception of the slave uprising in Haiti led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, most were brutally and successfully suppressed and the particular offending segment of the masses repressed and returned to their subaltern position. But

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acceptance of these doctrines was sold as a prerequisite for a golden age for democracy and economic development patterned on the United States, and as such was being held out to Latin America and much of the rest of the world as the model to follow.

Yet, as the linked models of Western, capitalist style democratization and neoliberal economics have taken hold throughout the hemisphere, their suitability as a form of governance and viable economic system is being called into question. Throughout Latin America there is growing skepticism that neoliberal economic policies will remedy the residual poverty and maldistribution of income and wealth that have plagued Latin America. Referring to income distribution, Brazil, for instance, had a Gini coefficient of 0.59 at the end of the nineties, reflecting some of the greatest inequality in the world (Franko, 2003: 357). Indeed, despite growth and macroeconomic stability during the nineties, no Latin American country experienced a decrease in income inequality, and many, including Argentina, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, saw income inequality increase (Franko, 2003: 355). This pattern has continued in the years that followed. Worse yet, statistics from the World Bank indicate that economic performance was disastrous in 2002, with overall negative growth of 1.1% (Shifter, 2003: 52). Even though economic growth has improved in 2003, 2004, and 2005, countries like Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador are still in severe crisis. Poverty is persistent throughout the region and has risen in many countries. A large segment of the population seems left out of what growth has taken place. As the masses and segments of the middle classes have expressed their frustration, the last few years have seen popular uprisings, aborted presidential terms, economic chaos, attempted coups d'état and the continued impoverishment of the masses if not segments of the middle class. This in turn calls into question the legitimacy of the governments—if not the political system—and the ability to govern. The progression of events suggests that there is a realignment that is profound and that may well represent a radical change in politics in the region. The ascendancy of new, progressive political parties like the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil, the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia and the election of Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay underline this trend. Further, it can be suggested that it is the democratization and celebration of civil society that have created the political space in which the masses can maneuver and mobilize, and in which political movements can grow.

Dissatisfaction with elite rule or an exclusionary political project, or with policies that cause or perpetuate the economic or ethnic marginalization of the masses is certainly not new in Latin America. It has engendered rebellions like those led by Túpac Amaru in the 1780s, Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti in 1791, and Hidalgo and Morelos in Mexico in 1810. There have been many

other uprisings like that led by Farabundo Martí in El Salvador in 1932. Indeed it was the generalized dissatisfaction with Porfirio Díaz's political ruling class in *fin de siglo* México that induced *los de abajo* (the underdogs or those on the bottom) to enroll in the various armies—and thus the revolutionary project—of the Mexican revolution. Such dissatisfaction and its focus on the failure of the political elite, have led to other less successful political rebellions as well. The Bogotazo and the ensuing *violencia* in Colombia from 1948 to 1956, and the Bolivian revolution in 1952 are cases in point.

Focusing on the last few decades, the economic slowdown during the "lost decade" of the 1980s combined with greater mobilization as political repression fell prey to the end of authoritarian rule and the expansion of democratization, to create a new political dynamic in many of the Latin American nations. Civil society became the locus of action and new forms of political action followed. The projection of an elitist armed vanguard as the spearhead of necessary change, began to fade in the face of unarmed political and social mobilizations. The assertion of popular power that had been seen in popular mobilizations like the pre-coup peasant leagues in Brazil's Northeast, began to bubble up in new and different forms. By the time neoliberal economic policy became more widespread in the 1990s, there was a growing realization that the extant political systems in much of Latin America were proving unable to meet the needs of the vast majorities. Indeed, there is a growing consensus that the traditional politicians' political enterprise is leaving behind the great majorities, and effectively further marginalizing specific groups within those majorities. Such groups include indigenous people and peasants in southern Mexico, Ecuador, and Bolivia, rural laborers and the poor in Brazil, and those who live in the slums and who have been left out of the diffusion of oil wealth in Venezuela as well as large segments of the lower and middle classes in Argentina and Uruguay. Changing attitudes have often led to the abandonment of established political parties for new, more amorphous, ad hoc parties like Chávez's Fifth Republic Movement in Venezuela (MVR), or the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, to the upsurge of new political/social movements and mass organizations, and a plethora of national strikes, demonstrations, and protests such as those that washed across Argentina at the end of 2001 and the beginning of 2002, or that swept across Bolivia in 2003 and 2005.

As has been the case all too often in Latin America, the political systems have been unable to provide basic security in food, housing, education, employment, or monetary value and banking to wide sectors of the population. That is, large segments of the population have been marginalized from the nation project, and the governing institutions have been unwilling or unable to provide solutions for their situations. Indeed, in the eyes of most of the Latin American popular sectors, the structural adjustments and neoliberal reforms

representing the Washington Consensus (common positive perspective on neoliberal economic policies and liberal democratization shared by international financial institutions and the U.S. Government) have threatened their security and well being. The insecurity and dissatisfaction felt by the popular sectors and segments of the middle class thus drive them to new forms of protest—to expand their repertoire of contentious actions as Sidney Tarrow (1998) might suggest—and to seek new and different political structures that might better respond to their needs. Old style parties and governments dominated by the elites are increasingly seen as unable to respond.

These current mobilizations seem to be different from the popular uprisings that preceded them. The systems of mass communication and related communication technology, and easy, low cost access to the internet have combined with higher levels of literacy, widened access to higher education and much greater political freedom under the democratization process (see UNDP, 1999: 3–9). This has occurred when ideas of grassroots democracy, popular participation and even elements of liberation theology and Christian Base Community organization have been widely disseminated. However, unlike radical revolutionary movements of the last few decades, these new movements do not employ or advocate the radical, revolutionary restructuring of the state through violent revolution. Rather, their primary focus is to work within civil society, and push government and society to the limits to achieve needed and necessary change and restructuring. As the nineties progressed, dissatisfaction with traditional political leaders and traditional political parties became more widespread as did a growing trend to doubt the legitimacy of the political system itself, and calls for a return to democracy and honest government (see Vanden, 2004). Traditional personalism, clientelism, corruption, and personal, class and group avarice became subjects of ridicule and anger if not rage. The effects of neoliberalism and continued classism and racism amidst ever stronger calls for equality began to be felt.

The dissonance was great. Thus one might conclude that the traditional political institutions seemed too far removed from the masses spatially, politically, class wise and in regard to political culture. Though not always well or precisely articulated, new demands were registered. They were not, however, always addressed to the political system per se, but to society more generally, since there were growing questions about the system's relevancy and legitimacy. Something different was being sought. Different groups were looking for new political structures that allowed for, if not encouraged their participation. Specific segments of the population sought forms of political organization that they could call their own, new structures that would respond to the perceived—and not always clearly articulated—demands being formulated by the popular sectors. Further, the widespread dissatisfaction

and varied protests and mobilizations were shattering the cultural and political hegemony historically exercised by the dominant classes and transnational capitalism. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if such forms of contention can force sufficient changes in the national economic and political power configurations to achieve greater economic equality and ensure effective political participation. Some even wonder if these new forms of contention will ultimately fail to force the restructuring of Latin American society and ultimately prove ineffective in generating the change that is so sorely needed. In the meantime, these movements represent an intense challenge to the extant neoliberal capitalist systems and the established parties and politicians—if not the forms of governance themselves—and are extremely subversive of the status quo.

Bolivia

Events in Bolivia are illustrative. In October of 2003, U.S.-educated Bolivian President Gonzalo "Goni" Sánchez de Lozada was forced out of office by massive displays of popular power by social movements, community organizations, unions and students. A staunch advocate of globalization and neoliberal policies prescribed by international financial institutions like the I.M.F. and World Bank, Sánchez de Lozada was also symbolic of the upper class Western-oriented political elites that have governed Latin America autocratically since the Spanish conquest in the early 1500s. His tormentors were equally symbolic of those the political class had long ruled and repressed. They were small farmers, indigenous peoples, miners, workers, students, and intellectuals who dared to challenge the status quo. Historically, the masses have been continually usurped by various political elites and rarely permitted to rule in their own right. This established a traditional pattern of rule and governance in the region that was more authoritarian than democratic and always elitist. Rarely were the masses allowed to rule or decide policy on their own at the national level. Indeed, in Latin America people of popular extraction and of color have been few in the rarified halls of national government. (The example of Mexico's great national hero, Zapotec Indian Benito Juárez, is one of the notable exceptions.) And even when people of color or those from the popular sectors were in the governing circles, it remains to be seen how often they ruled in favor of the masses.

So it was all the more amazing that the departure of Sánchez de Lozada was effected by "los de abajo"—those on the bottom (see Azuela's classic novel, 2002). He had been forced from office by those who had most often been powerless in Bolivian history. The groups that converged on the Bolivian

capital of La Paz and other large cities were predominantly lower class miners and agricultural workers and peasants, people who were mostly indigenous and the poor generally. Theirs was a struggle that had been going at least since the indigenous and peasant uprisings led by Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari in the 1780s. However, this time it was coordinated, effective, and most importantly, successful. Long before such national mobilization occurred, local communities often formed their own organizations to fight some aspect of colonial rule, exploitation or, more recently, globalization that was impacting them at the most local level. This reaction can, for instance, be seen in the strong grassroots movement against the privatization of the public water supply in the mostly indigenous community of Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2000. There, The Coordinating Committee to Defend Water and Life (*Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida*), remained locally rooted (see Shultz, 2003: 34–37). Yet—unlike previous local actions—this struggle was always framed in an international and national context. The protesters championed their cause through the internet and sent delegations to international meetings like the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Further, they were not only very aware of the international dimensions of their struggle and of its globalized causes, but were equally aware of the possibilities of international links with similar struggles and the international anti-globalization movement generally. This awareness, and their electronic and personal links to other movements in Bolivia and outside, later facilitated their integration into the broad national coalition that set forth a national agenda through support for Evo Morales and his MAS Party in the 2002 and 2005 presidential elections. This awareness and extensive networking with other new social movements allowed this and other local or regional movements to become part of a near unstoppable national mobilization that toppled the Sánchez de Lozada government and would eventually carry Evo Morales and his MAS party to power. By linking the local effects of the neoliberal privatization of the water supply in Cochabamba to global policies and national politics, they linked their struggle to a growing regional and international consensus, and to a national movement with concrete, achievable objectives.

Social Movements and the Bolivian Crisis

The intensity of the politicization of this and other social movements in Bolivia was demonstrated by the massive protests and the popular mobilizations that rocked the nation in 2003 and again in 2005. As had occurred in Ecuador in 2000 with CONAIE and allied groups, the popular mobilizations of indigenous peoples and rural peasants were through a newly formed

mostly peasant indigenous federation that called for the blockading of roads and popular mobilizations. This indigenous group, the Union of Bolivian Rural Workers and its leader Felipe Quispe were quickly joined by those who grew the coca leaves the Sánchez de Lozada government was eradicating under the direction of the U.S. government. This had been resisted vigorously by the cocaleros (Coca Growers) of the now famous Coca Growers Federation and its indigenous leader, Evo Morales (who had finished barely a percentage point behind President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in the 2002 elections). Other groups like the above-mentioned Cochabamba Coordinating Committee to Defend Water and Life also joined. An ongoing economic crisis and a crisis in traditional politics combined with strong U.S. pressure to open Bolivian markets and virtually eliminate the centuries-old cultivation of coca leaves, to stimulate the masses to meet and mobilize at the local, community level and to heed the calls of the social movements for action. The development of communal organization was also strong and had increased since the 1952 Revolution distributed land to the indigenous peasants. There were peasant unions and local community organizations throughout the Andean region of the country (interview, Gonzalo Muñoz, MAS alternate delegate to Bolivian Chamber of Deputies, La Paz, July 5, 2005). A strong Landless Movement had also developed in the non-Andean Santa Cruz region and became an instrument of peasant mobilization there. As indigenous groups had met in congresses and assemblies—often termed “Assemblies to Take Sovereignty”—in the late eighties and early nineties they had reached the clear realization that they needed instruments to achieve political power. As their consciousness developed, they began to speak explicitly of the “Sovereignty of the People” and the need to create “Political Instruments for the Sovereignty of the People” (interviews, Antonio Paredo, head of MAS bench in Bolivian Congress, La Paz, July 4, 2005; Silvestre Saisari, past president, landless movement in Bolivia, Tampa, Fla., February 17, 2005). As their thinking evolved, they constructed affiliated peasant unions, social movements and political movements like Pacakutic and MAS.

Yet even in what might be termed one of Latin America’s most organized societies (Ballvé, 2005), the precipitating event was a U.S.-backed plan to sell Bolivian natural gas through a Chilean port that landlocked Bolivia had lost to its southern neighbor in the ill fated War of the Pacific (1879–1881). The disastrous failure of the neoliberal model that President Sánchez de Lozada had so strongly advocated added to the widely shared perception that this new trade deal was but one more ruse, to extract wealth from the nation and leave the indigenous masses even more poverty ridden and totally subject to the influence of outside forces (Rother, 2003). Historically, most peasant and indigenous uprisings and even many strikes by the tin miners had been characterized by their

local nature and lack of linkages to national movements and international conditions. As suggested by comments from the protesters themselves, this uprising against Sánchez de Lozada and his policies was quite different. The voices of the people could be heard in the growing demonstrations:

He has governed the country for the benefit of the gringos and the multinational companies and the Chileans, not for the Bolivian people. (R. Clavijo, cited in Rother, 2003)

Globalization is just another name for submission and domination. We've had to live with that here for 500 years and now we want to be our own masters. (N. Apaza, cited in Anti-Trade Message, 2003)

The Union of Rural Workers and the Cocaleros were soon joined by other social movements, urban unions, and students as they mobilized in massive demonstrations in La Paz and other cities. The government futilely tried to repress the demonstrators, causing the loss of 80 lives. This enraged the opposition even more and increased the president's isolation. Meeting in their villages and union headquarters many more decided to join the uprising. Bolivian miners and others across the country also joined the protests and decided to march on the capital. As his political backers dropped away in the face of the mass mobilization Sánchez de Lozada was forced to resign and leave the country.

By the beginning of 2005 there was a growing popular perception that the essential rights of the people were not being honored by the successor government of Carlos Mesa and that the natural gas reserves—symbolic of national patrimony—were once again being looted by foreign interests. This occasioned popular mobilizations by the same popular movements that had driven Sánchez de Lozada from office. Indeed, as the government of former vice president Mesa was beset by similar massive mobilizations in May and June of 2005, the extent of the political power of the mobilized masses once again became manifest. With Evo Morales and his MAS party taking a prominent leadership position, the coalition of new social movements and labor unions pushed even harder. They were unwilling to allow the president of the senate—as the next in line constitutionally—to assume power when Mesa left. Nor was the head of the Chamber of Deputies acceptable. Both were seen as old line politicians who would betray the indigenous people and other mobilized popular sectors once in office. Further, the mobilized movements made it clear that a constituent assembly was necessary to draft a new constitution that would restructure the state to make it more responsive to popular interests and new elections for the national legislature were necessary to get more legislators who were from the common people and were linked to their inter-

ests. Only when these conditions were met and the President of the Supreme Court assumed power until new elections could be held, did MAS and the mobilized movements accept a settlement. This ongoing struggle culminated in the formation of a new government after elections were held in which Evo Morales was elected with an outright majority in the first round of voting.

This represented a substantial change in politics, as the mayor of La Paz observed in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, these events seemed to well represent the unification of subaltern groups and culmination of an historic cycle that Gramsci foresaw in the quote that opens this chapter. The new social movements in Bolivia had been able to take politics out of the presidential palace and halls of congress where elitist politics—and the traditional political class—dominated and into their space—the villages, neighborhoods, popular councils, and the streets and rural highways that they could control. They had taken the initiative themselves and had been able to forge a broad, national coalition that cemented the two presidents' downfall and established the viability of their social movements as key political actors whose demands had to be heeded. Unlike Ecuador in 2000 and the Bolivian revolution of 1952, they had done so without seizing power themselves, but had demonstrated just how effectively they could use and mobilize massive political power on a national scale. They had done so *from below*, through a broad coalition of social movements with strong identities and deep, democratic ties to their constituencies. They had initiated a form of participatory governance that would radically alter decision making practices in their Andean nation and that suggested that government must indeed serve the people if it was to endure.

Morales and his Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) were able to ride this wave of protest and mobilization as he was elected as the first indigenous president of Bolivia and MAS secured substantial representation in the national legislature (12 of 27 in the Senate and 73 of 130 in the Chamber of Deputies) in the new elections of December 2005. Indeed, Morales seems to have well captured the dynamic essence of the combined movements that brought him to power. As he said in his inaugural address on January 22, 2006,

We can continue to speak of our history, we can continue to remember how those who came before us struggled: Tupac Katari to restore the Tuantinsuyo, Simón Bolívar who fought for this larger nation (*patria grande*), Ché Guevara who fought for a new more equal world. This democratic cultural struggle, this cultural democratic revolution, is part of the struggle of our ancestors, it is the continuity from Tupac Katari; this struggle and these results are Ché Guevara's continuity. We are here, Bolivian and Latin American sisters and brothers; we are going to continue until we achieve equality in this country. (www.Bolivia-usa.org, accessed June 20, 2006)

Brazil and the Movement of Landless Rural Workers, the MST

Politics in Brazil have also been altered by the insertion of the largest Latin American social movement into the national political arena. The MST (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*) was formed as a response to long-standing economic, social and political conditions in Brazil. Land, wealth and power were allocated in very unequal ways in Brazil since the conquest in the early 1500s. Land has remained highly concentrated and as late as 1996, 1% of the landowners owned 45% of the land (Petras, 2000: 35). Conversely, as of 2001 there were some 4.5 million landless rural workers in Brazil. Wealth has remained equally concentrated. In 2001 the Brazilian Institute of Government Statistics reported that the upper 10% of the population averaged an income that was nineteen times greater than the lowest 40% (Brazilian Institute of Statistics, 2001). The plantation agriculture that dominated the colonial period and the early republic became the standard for Brazilian society. The wealthy few owned the land, reaped the profits, and decided the political destiny of the many. Slavery was the institution that provided most of the labor on the early plantation system and thus set the nature of the relationship between the wealthy landowning elite and the disenfranchised toiling masses who labored in the fields. Land has stayed in relatively few hands in Brazil, and the agricultural laborers continued to be poorly paid and poorly treated. Further, after the commercialization and mechanization of agriculture that began in the 1970s, much of the existing rural labor force became superfluous. As this process continued and became more tightly linked to the increasing globalization of production, not only were rural laborers let go, sharecroppers were expelled from the land they had farmed and small farmers lost their land to larger family or commercial estates. This resulted in growing rural unemployment and the growth of rural landless families with few prospects. Many were forced to migrate to the cities to swell the numbers of the urban poor while others opted for the government sponsored Amazon colonization program whereby they were transported to the Amazon region to cut down the rainforest and begin to cultivate the land. Few found decent jobs in the city and the poor soil of the former rainforest would allow for little sustained agriculture. Thus their plights worsened.

The immediate origins of the Landless go back to the bitter struggle to survive under the agricultural policies implemented by the military government that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. The landless rural workers in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul began to organize to demand land in the early eighties. Other landless people soon picked up their cry in the neighboring states of Paraná, and Santa Catarina. These were the beginning of the MST (see Stedile and Fernandes, 1999; A. Wright and Wolford, 2003; and

Bradford and Rocha, 2002). They built on a long tradition of rural resistance and rebellion that extends back to the establishments of *quilombos* or large inland settlements of run-away slaves and to the famous rebellion by the poor rural peasants of Canudos in the 1890s. In more recent times it included the famous Peasant Leagues of Brazil's impoverished Northeast in the 1950s and early 1960s and the Grass War and peasant struggles in São Paulo State in the 1950s (see Welch, 1999 and 2001). When the MST was founded in southern Brazil in 1984 as a response to rural poverty and lack of access to land, wealth and power, similar conditions existed in many states in Brazil. Indeed, there were landless workers and peasants throughout the nation. Thus the MST soon spread from Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná in the South to states like Pernambuco in the Northeast and Pará in the Amazon region. It rapidly became a national organization with coordinated policies and strong local participatory organization and decision making, and frequent state and national meetings based on direct representation.

By 2001 there were active MST organizations in 23 of the 26 states (interview, Geraldo Fontes, MST national leadership, São Paulo, September 17, 2003). Today the MST is a vital, vigorous and often militant national organization that is arguably the largest and most powerful social movement in Brazil and Latin America. The ranks of those associated with it number over a million (Fernandes, 2005). It has a high mobilization capacity at the local, state and even national level. In 1997, for instance, the organization was able to mobilize one hundred thousand people for a march on Brasília. Their views are well articulated. They have a clear understanding of the increased commercialization of agriculture and its consequences for the way in which production is organized, if not rural life more generally. Similarly, they are fully conscious of how globalization is strengthening these trends and threatening their livelihood. In small classes, meetings and assemblies and through their newspaper, *Jornal Dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*, magazine, *Revista Sem Terra*, and numerous pamphlets, they carefully educate their base through a well planned program of political education. They even establish schools in their encampments, settlements and cooperatives to make sure the next generation has a clear idea of the politics in play. In this way, they effectively challenged the cultural hegemony exercised by the dominant national classes and the international capitalist system.

The Landless also facilitate the organic development of highly participatory grass roots organization, beginning with groups of ten families organized as a Base Nucleus in each neighborhood. Local general assemblies are used frequently and all members of the family units are encouraged to participate. Regional, state and even national assemblies are also held on a regular basis, with representatives of the lower level units attending. Leadership is collective at all

levels, including the national where some 102 militants make up the National Coordinating Council (Coordinação Nacional).

Their political culture and decision making processes break from the authoritarian tradition and are subversive of the dominant political culture. The movement has been heavily influenced by Liberation Theology and the participatory democratic culture that is generated by the use and study of Paulo Freire's approach to self-taught, critical education. Indeed, the strongly participatory nature of the organization and the collective nature of leadership and decision making have made for a dynamic new democratic, participatory political culture that challenges traditional authoritarian notions and vertical decision making structures (see MST, 2000, and Rodrigues Brandão, 2001). One of the characteristics of new social movements like the MST is their broad national vision. Thus the Landless envision a thoroughgoing land reform and complete restructuring of agrarian production in all of Brazil. The MST believes that is impossible to develop the nation, to construct a democratic society or eliminate poverty or social inequality in the countryside without eliminating the latifundio. But they go on to say that agrarian reform is only viable if it is part of a popular project that would transform Brazil's economic and social structures (MST, 2000).

Like many of the new social and political movements in Latin America, the Sem Terra are well aware of how their struggle is linked to international conditions. Thus they begin by challenging the positive vision of neoliberalism presented by the globalized media and the attempt at hegemonic control that it exercises. In a draft document on the "Fundamental Principles for the Social and Economic Transformation of Rural Brazil," they note that "the political unity of the Brazilian dominant classes under Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration (1994–2000) has consolidated the implementation of neoliberalism [in Brazil]," and that these neoliberal policies led to the increased concentration of land and wealth in the hands of the few and the impoverishment of Brazilian society. The document goes on to say that "Popular movements must challenge this neoliberal conceptualization of our economy and society" (see MST, 2001a).

Mass political mobilization is another fundamental organizational principle as seen in their massive mobilizations for land takeovers and demonstrations. This vision is widely disseminated to those affiliated with the organization. A pamphlet disseminated by the organization, "Brazil Needs a Popular Project," calls for popular mobilizations, noting that "All the changes in the history of humanity only happened when the people were mobilized." And that in Brazil, "all the social and political changes that happened were won when the people mobilized and struggled" (MST, 2001b).

This type of national organization had not been the case in prior local or regional movements. Previously, identity was much more locally rooted. As had been the case in other Latin American countries, traditional elite dominated politics and bourgeois political parties had proven unable and unwilling to address the deteriorating economic conditions of the marginalized groups who were suffering the negative effects of economic globalization. The response by the new movements was grassroots organization and the development of a new repertoire of actions that broke with old forms of political activity. Developing organization and group actions began to tie individual members together in a strongly forged group identity. They were sometimes assisted in this task by progressive organizations concerned with economic and social justice. In the case of Brazil and the Landless, this role was played by the Lutheran church and especially the Pastoral Land Commission of the Catholic Church. Although these organizations assisted the Landless as did some segments of the Workers Party (PT), the organization never lost its autonomy. It was decided from the onset that this was to be an organization for the Landless Workers that would be run *by the Landless Workers for their benefit as they defined it*. They engaged in direct actions such as land takeovers from large estates and public lands, the construction of black plastic covered encampments along the side of the road to call attention to their demands for land, and marches and confrontations when necessary. They even occupied the family farm of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso shortly before the 2002 election to draw attention to his landowning interests and the consequent bias they attributed to him. They were at times brutally repressed, assassinated and imprisoned, but they persevered, forcing land distribution to their people and others without land. Their ability to mobilize as many as 12,000 people for a single land takeover or 100,000 for a national march suggested just how strong their organizational abilities were and how well they could communicate and coordinate at the national level. They also created a great deal of national support and helped to create a national consensus that there was a national problem with land distribution and that some substantial reform was necessary.

The Landless have been well attuned to the international globalization struggle and consider themselves part of it, helping to organize and participating in the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre and sending their representatives to demonstrations and protests throughout the world. Indeed, at least one recent work suggests that this was part of a developing global backlash against economic globalization (see Broad, 2002). Struggles that were once local and isolated are now international and linked (see della Porta and Tarrow, 2005). The news media and growing international communications

links like cellular phones and especially electronic mail greatly facilitated the globalization of struggle and the globalization of awareness of local struggles and support and solidarity for them. This and the dramatic actions like massive land takeovers by the MST also generated considerable support at the national level and international level and help to define what might be considered a local problem as a national problem that requires national attention and national resources to remedy it.

The interaction between the MST and the Workers Party (PT) is also instructive. Although relations between the two organizations are generally excellent at the local level, with overlapping affiliations, the national leaderships have remained separate and not always as cordial. The MST has maintained a militant line in regard to the need to take over unused land and assert their agenda, whereas much of the PT leadership has wanted to be more conciliatory. Thus the Landless backed and supported Lula (Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva) and the Workers Party in most local campaigns and the national campaigns for the presidency. In this way they helped to achieve significant regime change in Brazil, where Lula was elected with 61.27% of the vote in the second round of voting in 2002. Indeed, realizing the PT's historic challenge to neoliberal policies and elitist rule, the Landless turned out heavily in the election to join some 80% of the registered voters who participated in the voting in both rounds. Once the election was over, the Landless did not press to be part of the government. Rather, they continued to press the government for a comprehensive land reform program and a redistribution of the land and wealth. There would be no return to politics as usual. The PT would press its "0 Hunger" program and other ameliorative social and economic initiatives and the MST would press the PT government for the structural reforms (e.g., comprehensive agrarian reform and economic restructuring) that it considered necessary. Indeed, this pattern was similar to the strained relationship that the Zapatistas had had with progressive parties in Mexico. Beginning in 2004 the MST displayed considerable dissatisfaction with what they considered the relative inaction of the PT government in regard to land reform and was threatening to once again engage in massive land takeovers, even though such actions were often portrayed quite negatively by much of the media. The Lula government was facing increasing pressure from international financial institutions and national economic interests to moderate its policies and was further beset by scandals in 2005. By functioning in civil society and not becoming part of the government, the MST was, however, free to pursue its original demands for land reform and socio-economic transformation, offer some critical support to the besieged PT government, but continue to push for real change from below.

Conclusion

As suggested by the examples of Bolivia and the MST, as new social movements grow and are politicized, they come to represent a clear response to the neoliberal economic policies that are being foisted on Latin American nations by international financial institutions, the U.S. government and national economic elites. They have become bulwarks in the resistance to the process of neoliberal globalization advocated by the Washington Consensus and have aggressively resisted the implementation of neoliberal policies. Unlike the governments and ruling parties like the PT, the MST and other new social movements are embedded in civil society and can take advantage of the considerable political space that has opened up as nominal democratization becomes more institutionalized.

As they engage in grassroots organization and massive local and national mobilizations, the diverse groups in Bolivia, the MST and social movements elsewhere have challenged how politics are conducted in their countries and the region. Their growth and militancy have generated whole new repertoires of actions that include national mobilizations so massive that they can topple governments (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina) and/or force them to change their policies. Indeed, they pose the possibility of at least some form of "rule from below." They have left the traditional parties far behind as they forge new political horizons and create a non-authoritarian, participatory political culture. Such movements are also using existing political space to maximum effect. In the process they are strengthening participatory democratic practice substantially and altering the way politics are conducted in Latin America. What remains to be seen is if such actions—no matter how concerted—are sufficient to achieve the long needed structural reforms in the elite dominated internationalized capitalist systems that dominate in Latin America. If indeed such mobilizations are—as Gramsci might conclude—coming together in a new cycle of subaltern actions culminating in successes that are breaking the historic hegemony exercised by the ruling classes in Latin America, we are still left to ponder if this in itself will lead to a new historic stage of popular empowerment, or if this is just a giant leap along that road.