

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

MST in the footsteps of the Zapatistas

The Landless Movement's terrorist actions are creating the conditions for civil war in Brazil.

Starting out from São Paulo on Feb. 16, a contingent of militants belonging to Brazil's Landless Movement (MST), an affiliate of the narco-terrorist São Paulo Forum, began a march on the capital of Brasilia. Their plan is to arrive there on April 21, the one-year anniversary of the bloody confrontation between MST provocateurs and police which occurred at El Dorado de Carajas. Inspired by Mao Zedong, the MST thus begins its "long march" from the countryside to the city, in what is intended to be an endless process of destabilization.

As its power has increased, the MST has flaunted its openly pro-terrorist nature. In January of this year, it chose the Pontal de Paranapanema zone of São Paulo state to launch an uninterrupted series of land invasions. It is this region which Mao-devotee Jose Rainha, considered to be the MST's military leader, thinks should become an "autonomous region."

Faced not only with the government's inaction, but its tacit support for the MST's actions, landowners in this region are opting for self-defense. Thus, Pontal has become a time bomb which could ignite a bloody war in the Brazilian countryside. On Feb. 17, in the midst of the protest march and wave of land invasions, congressman and MST lawyer Luis Eduardo Greenhalgh, an editorial board member of the São Paulo Forum's magazine *América Livre*, threatened that "if anyone dies there [in Pontal], there will be guerrilla warfare."

At this point, no one doubts that

the MST is prepared to carry out acts of irregular warfare. For example, the "march to Brasilia" has a well-organized logistical base, and, according to media reports, its participants are highly disciplined. There are daily brainwashing sessions in the style of Peru's Shining Path narco-terrorists, in order to keep people focussed on the march's objective. Facing an MST flag, militants must swear allegiance to the movement's goals, and shout out, "I am the MST flag. My red color represents the blood of dead peasants."

Aside from the actions confirming the MST's terrorist character, intelligence sources have told *EIR* that the group is closely linked, not only to the Zapatistas in Mexico, but also to the Colombian FARC terrorists, from whom MST militants receive training. There are also ties to the EPR terrorists, active in the Mexican state of Guerrero.

The MST's "long march" is supported and encouraged by high-level representatives of Liberation Theology, such as the archbishop of São Paulo, Cardinal Evaristo Arns. On Feb. 18, after the march began, the cardinal and five of his auxiliary bishops issued a statement backing the MST's actions. "The occupation of lands not being worked is legitimate," it read. Arns added, "The church is on the side of the landless. This is an historic march. Brazil can wait no longer. Agrarian reform is 500 years behind the times."

Priests in cities along the march route are collaborating with the MST

as well, providing food and clothing to militants. This support for the MST by Liberation Theology networks has the specific purpose of involving the Vatican in this matter. With the knowledge that Pope John Paul II will visit Brazil in October of this year, the theolibbers seek to impose on the Pontiff explicit support for the MST, using the pretext of a generic demand for "agrarian reform."

On Feb. 15, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso met with the pope at the Vatican, the first such official visit of a Brazilian head of state. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Pontiff read a statement referencing an "agrarian reform carried out in accordance with existing law." The mere mention of agrarian reform by the pope met with the immediate applause of MST leader João Pedro Stedile, who boasted that "the pope agrees with us."

There are two organizations providing international backup for the MST's "long march." One is the Mexico-based *Via Campesina* (Peasant Way), whose leaders are currently visiting Brazil; the other is the Food International Action Network, headquartered in Germany. In May, together with the MST, these organizations will launch an international campaign in support of agrarian reform, to force it on six countries: Brazil, South Africa, Honduras, Kenya, the Philippines, and India.

Peasant Way appeared for the first time in Brazil around last year's conflict at El Dorado de Carajas, together with France's Danielle Mitterrand. At an international conference held on April 21, 1996 in Mexico, the group published its program, which was the colonial doctrine of the new world order. For rural areas, it proposes use of primitive agricultural technologies whose adoption would exterminate rural populations.