

FROM THE DREAM OF GOLD TO ACCESS TO LAND: Signs of Violence in Serra Pelada and Life Stories in Palmares II


DO SONHO DO OURO AO ACESSO À TERRA: signos da violência em Serra Pelada e histórias de vida em Palmares II

DEL SUEÑO DEL ORO AL ACESSO A LA TIERRA: signos de violencia en Serra Pelada e historias de vida en Palmares II

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RESUMO:

The purpose of this article is to show that Serra Pelada (1980-1992), the largest open gold-digging in the world, has a close relationship with the establishment of rural settlements in southeastern Pará. To demonstrate that the epic of the prospectors and the historic struggle of workers for a piece of land have been linked for more than three decades, two resources are used: a photography taken by Sebastião Salgado in Serra Pelada, in 1986, and testimonies from ex-garimpeiros who now lives in Palmares II, a settlement created in Parauabepas, in 1996. The discussion is based on the social-political-economic context of the military dictatorship and the first actions of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in Pará.

KEYWORDS: Resistance; peasant narratives; Serra Pelada; MST.

My greatest hope is to provoke a debate on the human condition from the point of view of people in exodus from all over the world. My photographs are a vector between what happens in the world and people who cannot witness what happens (Sebastião Salgado, 2000).

Introduction

First, the description of a photograph by Sebastião Salgado, produced in 1986 (FIG.1): like a statue, the worker stands firmly on the ground, with his feet planted resolutely on the ground, determined not to give in to a millimeter. His left hand grips the policeman's gun. The rigid torso, strong arms and muscular legs, carved in countless daily ascents and descents on improvised stairs with bags of gravel on the back, express strength and energy. His face, turned towards the police and which appears in profile for us, has nothing vague or serene: it is all concentration. The prospector's muscular body, covered only with short shorts and a torn shirt, is in perfect balance on the sloping terrain and contrasts with the figure of the military man, in uniform and unstable. Despite being diminished by the strong physical presence of the worker, the policeman also expresses power when he sees the garimpeiro as if taken by the belief that he is capable of controlling the world around him. Most of the spectators (all miners) who follow the scene have their eyes on the antagonists. Their gestures and expressions are easily readable. Some look with attention, others with apprehension and others with astonishment, while a portion seems to want to leave the conflict.

Figure 1: Gold miner challenges military police officer. Serra Pelada, 1986



Source: SALGADO, 2019, p. 86-87.

Now, the transcript of the testimony of a peasant, collected in 2020:

I worked on the land with my parents before my adventure in search of gold and wealth. I became a gold digger, I went around everywhere that they said they had a place to mine. But it was in Serra Pelada that I stayed the longest. I lived times of suffering and losses. Today, I have a good life. I left the drink, I'm in the church, I have my garden, my cows, a little bit of everything. My children are graduated from university and it was on earth that I regained my will to live, to smile (COLOMBIANO, 2020).

Regarding the image of the gold digger who challenges the police, it is possible to affirm that it reveals a lot of the conflict and tension that were present in the epic lived by men wallowed in the mud, digging for gold in Serra Pelada, in the 1980s. On the peasant's words, identified here as "Colombiano", a former gold miner from Serra Pelada and now a resident of the Palmares II Settlement, of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), in southeastern Pará, it is possible to say that they reveal the greatness of life of a simple man, full of struggle, dignity, faith and hope. The purpose of this article is to put these two worlds in dialogue. In other words, to show that the past of Serra Pelada, made present by Salgado's photography and by the testimonies of the peasants,

unfolds in the lives of men who, after the closure of the mining in 1992, continued to live in the region, replacing the dream of gold by the earth.

Therefore, it is from these two universes, what is contained in the photographic image and that of the stories told by rural workers from the Palmares II Settlement, in the municipality of Parauapebas, that this article is developed. The idea is to demonstrate that the prospector's courageous gesture and the workers' historic struggle for land ownership have been linked for more than three decades. For this, the conditions that involved the emergence of the Serra Pelada and MST gold mining in Pará will be analyzed from the socio-political-economic context of the final phase of the Brazilian dictatorship, from the actions of peasant leaders to occupy unproductive lands and land grabbing¹ within the State and depositions of settlers in Palmares II.

The interviews with rural workers in this article refer to a qualitative methodology used to dialogue, organize and interpret data, focusing on the case study. Robert Yin (2010, p. 39) explains that "the case study is an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident". This methodological strategy uses techniques adopted by historical research, but adds sources of evidence that are usually not included in the historian's repertoire: discussion group, conversation circles and a systematic series of interviews.

The historical and spatial contextualization of the case study is carried out through the interaction and comparison of the specific case with wider spaces in which it is inserted. The contextualization allows to understand the case as a result of a broader historical process in which that particular territory is inserted. This can be done, for example, through analyzes between the private and the general, which enables a greater understanding of the surroundings and differences of that territory (Palmares II settlement) with other socio-spatial scales, such as the state (State of Pará), the regional (Amazon), the national (Brazil), the continental (Latin America). For that, maps, historical series and theoretical productions can be used to inform us about that space at multiple

¹ The term "grilagem" is related to an old practice of aging false documents to get possession of an area of land. The counterfeit papers were placed in a box with crickets. Over time, the action of the insects gave the documents an aged appearance. "Grilagem" happens until today due to the deficiencies found in the land control system in Brazil. Despite the various proposals, the government never implemented a single land registry or a specific registry for large landowners. Cf. TRECCANI, G. D. **Violência e grilagem: instrumentos de aquisição da propriedade da terra no Pará**. Belém: UFPA, Iterpa, 2001.

scales and its various related phenomena, including economy, population, health and the environment.

It is also worth mentioning another important element of the methodology adopted here. It is about the identity between “subject and object” (MINAYO, 2007), where it is natural for the researcher to be interwoven and committed to his theme, but without failing to question, reflect and reveal new meanings, conceiving field work as construction dialogical. Jeanne Favret-Saada (1977) considers that research arouses many affections linked to the researcher's personal history and his ethical and political options, in addition to reflections on the humanities as a field of knowledge. Affections are revealed in an experience of otherness, whether in field work or by other means. Accepting to occupy this place and allowing oneself to be affected by it enables a specific, dialogical and committed communication. This praxis presupposes valuing communicational processes and dialogues in which the questions, answers and explanations found for a given research problem are collectively constructed, valuing contributions and information discovered in a dynamic context.

The Palmares II settlement, the locus of part of this research, is the result of the struggle and historical resistance of the peasants, specifically along the PA-275, an important highway in the southeast of Pará that cuts through the municipalities of Curionópolis, Parauapebas and Eldorado dos Carajás, areas rich in ore. Twenty interviews were conducted during the fieldwork. The data collected and observed are, therefore, the product of the stories of social subjects linked to the oldest families in the settlement, who know the history of the territory and are part of this collective experience of resistance. Because of the violence and threats that still persist in the region, the identities of the interviewees have been preserved - they are identified by the names of countries in South America and the Caribbean.

A world of dreams, violence and precarious living and health conditions

Serra Pelada, the largest open pit in the world, attracted thousands of men, the vast majority of them poor and illiterate, who, counting on only two hands and a pickaxe, dreamed of becoming millionaires overnight. The Amazonian eldorado emerged in 1979, when the news that a small landowner had discovered gold began to take “garimpeiros” to a region distant 153 kilometers from the headquarters of the municipality of Marabá, in southeastern Pará. Brazil was going through a serious economic crisis, with huge

foreign debt, and the gold mine was seen as a possible solution to the country's financial problems.²

Serra Pelada was part of the military government's strategy of exploiting the natural resources of the Amazon, based on an exogenous development paradigm. Concomitant to Serra Pelada, cities emerged populated by migrants from the Northeast and other regions of Brazil, who later provided manpower to build the Vale do Rio Doce Company (CVRD), now called Vale. The foundation of Parauapebas is emblematic of this history. At the foot of the mountain, the emergence of the municipality was stimulated by impoverished migrants, under the articulation and domination of the decadent oligarchy of the former chestnut trees in the region. And in the Serra de Carajás the Vale structure was built, which became the owner of all the mineral wealth of the region, and today it continues its prey through the agro-mining project, centered on commodities and an accelerated process of social metabolism.

Despite the uncertainty regarding the process of social reproduction³ and poor living and health conditions⁴, thousands of migrants went to Serra Pelada - usually aged between 21 and 40 years, most of them were from the Northeast, mainly from Maranhão, a fact common in the mines of the Amazon (MATHIS, 1995). Serra Pelada has become an important national issue. The stories of wealth and violence lured by the gold rush attracted much of the press. The "garimpo" also became a theme for many photographers, among them Juca Martins, who did the first great photographic report of Serra Pelada, in 1980, and Sebastião Salgado, who started in 1986 a project on the decline of manual labor, "the end of first major industrial revolution". Salgado arrived in Serra Pelada when the mountain had been transformed into a hole, almost all the gold

² Between 1980 and 1990, the Serra Pelada gold mine officially produced 48.3 tons of gold. Due to the evasion of gold, which can be estimated at 25% between 1980 and 1983 and at 50% between 1984 and 1990, the actual production corresponds to approximately 56.7 tons. This represents \$ 663 million - or \$ 872 million for actual production (MATHIS, 1995, p. 15).

³ The discussion on health and determination of the health-disease process incorporates the category of "living conditions" as a particular expression of the general reproduction procedures of society. This category acts as a mediator between the broader processes that shape the way of life of society as a whole and the health situation of a specific population group. Living conditions are expressed in four major dimensions of the process of social reproduction: biological, ecological, behavioral and economic (CASTELLANO, 1991).

⁴ Living and health conditions were precarious. Testimonies from ex-garimpeiros who now live in Palmares II reveal that in Serra Pelada diseases such as low back pain, malaria and oropouche fever were common. In late November 1994, the Evandro Chagas Institute (IEC), in Belém, was notified of an outbreak of fever (accompanied by head and joint pain) among the miners in Serra Pelada. Studies have shown that the cases were not malaria, but oropouche fever, caused by the oropouche virus (Simbu group, genus Bunyavirus, family Bunyaviridae). Considering the high positivity of IH and IgM specific antibodies for oropouche in Serra Pelada, it was concluded that the epidemic was extensive and presented an attack rate of around 83%. This number corresponded to the infection of about five of the six thousand inhabitants in the area. It was also common for gold prospectors to suffer mercury poisoning and problems caused by venomous animals, such as snakes (ROSA et AL., 1996).

removed and fifty thousand gold miners struggled to keep the pit two hundred meters deep.⁵

It is possible to consider that his photographs contributed decisively to the image of Serra Pelada that still persists today: a dense mass of bodies that spread like ants through a giant crater and dig the earth in search of gold. A fantastic setting, a typical Hollywood landscape, which refers to a biblical vision and events such as the construction of the pyramids in Egypt. "Never, since the construction of the pyramids by thousands of slaves or the gold rush in Klondike [which took a hundred thousand miners to Alaska, between 1896 and 1899], has there been such an epic human tragedy", says Salgado (1999, p.11). Commenting on the work of the Brazilian photographer, José de Souza Martins (2008, p. 156) affirms that "the epic is in the very brutality of the scenes, of the crowd that acts like ants, of the desire to leave nothing, to rise above current possibilities, from inside the huge excavation hole".

Salgado's images also evoke the imagery of the Old West around the south and southeast of Pará: the courage and resistance of thousands of men who, moved by the dream of getting rich, faced a hard world, full of mud, rawness and extreme violence. Virtually every day there were accidents and violent conflicts in the mine – the cases of murders or deaths of gold miners who had suffered landslides, however, did not cause a commotion to the point of interrupting the search for gold. The photo of the gold digger who is staring at a military policeman while holding the barrel of the soldier's rifle (FIG. 1), one of the most reproduced and, consequently, most popular images in Salgado's work, is an example of this situation.

It is possible to say what you see in Salgado's photo – as described at the beginning of this text. But certainly what you see is not everything that photography can express – a fact that is very typical of photographs. It expresses more as we know more about the context in which it was captured. Not that the photo says anything to a viewer who doesn't know everything (or almost everything) about Serra Pelada. The image can say a lot and certainly evoke so many others, depending on what it can stimulate in the memory of each one of us and our prior information on the registered subject. The meaning of the photo, therefore, is not limited to the clash witnessed by Salgado, who

⁵ Sebastião Salgado only obtained permission from the Federal Police, which controlled access to the mine, to photograph Serra Pelada after the military's departure from power in 1985. The photographer, who in the second half of the 1960s had acted as a militant for the Popular Action (AP), one of the leftist organizations that fought the military government, before moving to Europe, was monitored during the dictatorship by the Information Operations Department – Center for Internal Defense Operations (DOI-Codi).

suspends the flow of time at the exact moment when the gold digger faces the armed police head on.

Photography opens up the possibility of triggering an appeal to the memory of the time, which cannot be directly narrated by the visual document. What matters here is what lies beyond the surface of the image, as it does not bring together the knowledge of the past. The meaning of photography is more in the eye of the beholder on the scene being portrayed than in the photographer's talent for recording things as they are. It is the role of the interpreter to try to understand the photographic image as discontinuous information about a past event. This is a central argument for Boris Kossoy (2016), author of a methodology for investigating and interpreting history through photography. When discussing the ambiguous character of the photographic image, he considers it "a means of knowledge through which we visualize microcenarians of the past".

The photographic image has many faces and realities. The first is the most obvious, visible. It is exactly what is there, immobile in the document (or in the petrified image of the mirror), in the appearance of the referent, that is, its external reality, the testimony, the content of the photographic image (subject to identification), the second reality, in short. The other faces are those that we cannot see, they remain hidden, invisible, they are not made explicit, but that we can intuit; it is the other side of the mirror and the document; no longer the immobile appearance or the verified existence, but also, and mainly the life of the situations and men portrayed, disappeared, the history of the theme and the genesis of the image in space and time, the inner reality of the image: the first reality (KOSSOY, 2016, p. 131, 132).

Still according to Kossoy (2016, p. 132), when examining certain photographs, the viewer, almost without realizing it, dives into its content and starts to imagine "the plot of the facts and the circumstances that involved the subject and or the representation itself (the photographic document) in the context in which it was produced". It is an almost intuitive reconstitution "mental exercise". Based on this assumption, the proposal now is to stimulate a reflection on the context where the gesture of the gold digger who holds the barrel of the military policeman's rifle is born. In other words, thinking about how the socio-political conditions of the time influenced the organization of work and contributed to keeping thousands of gold miners under the control of the forces of repression.

A fleeting state of insurgencies

Despite the appearance of chaos, it is possible to consider that the activity in Serra Pelada had an organized nucleus. As soon as the mining began, the government of General João Figueiredo (1979-1985) sent Sebastião Rodrigues de Moura, Major Curió, a former combatant in the Araguaia guerrilla to the site. His task was to ensure order (he forbade the carrying of weapons, the presence of women and the consumption of alcohol), to organize work (miners could only dig the land vertically to avoid invading the neighboring "bank")⁶ and control the mass arrival of more "garimpeiros", in addition to preventing the smuggling of gold.⁷ The military divided the land into three hundred small plots of land ("ravines", with an area of two by three meters) and distributed them to the pioneers, according to the order of arrival. The men who came next became employees of the "capitalists" (owners of the "ravines").

The government intervention in Serra Pelada, justified by national security reasons, led to improvements to the site, including telecommunications, a health post and a Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF) agency – however, the population around the mining, which reached 80 thousand people in 1983, still without access to light, water and sewage (MATHIS, 1995). The measures had been motivated by the military's efforts to control the extraction of gold. For obedience to the established order to be absolute, there was repression by the government intervener. Major Curió once said in the speech with which he started the day's activities at the camp: "Here the gun that shoots the highest is mine!" "In Serra Pelada he would carry out one of the last actions to direct the masses on the part of the dictatorship, the first and last in which the dictatorship was successful in its dream of taming and framing rural populations", says Martins (2008, p. 156).

The determination of the "garimpeiro" that faces the police is, therefore, a concrete act of transgression of the order, a questioning of the legitimacy of the repressive agent. A challenging attitude towards the law, in a society that had just gone through 21 years of military dictatorship. The prospector's act is a form of political action carried out by someone tired of submitting to precarious conditions of existence. From those who cry out for justice, from those who ask for the recognition of rights and from those who have always been on the margins of the country's socio-political decisions.

⁶ The gravel was placed in bags and transported by earth carriers, who climbed dozens of meters by precarious wooden stairs, baptized as "goodbye, mommy", to deposit them outside the pit under the supervision of the "sharpener", a trusted man of the "capitalist". The bags were then taken to a sifting area, which also belonged to the owner of the "ravine".

⁷ Major Curió forced all the gold to be sold to the local Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF), which paid in cash, but below the market price. This, however, was not enough to prevent the smuggling of gold.

His visceral reaction brings out the consciousness and conviction of a subject who has reached his limit. By articulating feelings of struggle against oppression and injustice, Salgado's photograph can be seen as a symbol of resistance against police power and as a reaction to the forces that oppose the worker. Finally, it refers to the idea of an uprising.

According to Judith Butler (2017, p. 24), an uprising happens when people start to group, to move, to demonstrate in public and act to dismantle the regime or the power to which they are subjected. "These groupings, displacements, public manifestations and actions are based on indignation and refusal, on the conviction that subjection was not only too far, but that, in addition, it is unfair" (BUTLER, 2017, p. 29). The image captured by Salgado, capable of integrating an "iconography of the revolts", is representative of this feeling that dignity, linked to the moral limit of what must be supported, has been exceeded or denied. The photograph of the "admirable courage" gold digger facing an "established authority" also fits what Butler (2017, p. 26) calls the "structuring metaphor" of the uprisings: "the image of someone who stands up, someone for whom getting up represents a form of liberation, someone with the physical capacity to free themselves from bonds, chains, signs of slavery, subjection, feudalism".

However, the uprising is not something individual, but "a shared conviction that circulates among people", according to Butler (2017, p.29). There is no one-man uprising. "The uprising is always a collective adventure, a word that does not exist individually," says Antonio Negri (2017, p. 39). In other words, whoever does an uprising does it together and when he finds unacceptable suffering. The garimpeiro's individual indignation did not have enough power, or did not cause enough commotion, to mobilize other garimpeiros to rebel against the precarious working conditions and police violence – the military had behaved too aggressively after arresting a worker who had invaded the "Ravine" of another "garimpeiro". In Salgado's photograph, the presence of a man who, with folded arms, only observes the scene complacently is an indication that the indignation has not spread. It is possible that the individual's desire for enrichment was stronger than the group's collective capacity for unity. The "we" was not formed in Serra Pelada.

From the prospector's life, 'hard and suffered', to the conquest of the land

In Brazil, the first rural settlements emerged in the mid-1980s, but the movement only became more intense in the following decade, when peasant organizations

consolidated themselves as the basis for the construction of another rural world, without large estates and with better living conditions. The settlements were viewed with strangeness, fear and prejudice by the population. This behavior was related to the violent land conflicts that existed in several areas of the country, including Pará (HÉBETTE, 2004; LEITE *et. al.*, 2004. Pará has been recording murders of peasant leaders and human rights defenders since the 1970s, when thousands of Brazilians from all regions, but mainly from States Northeasterners such as Maranhão, Piauí and Ceará, answered the government's call and migrated to the Amazon to colonize the forest, seen as strategic for national interests. Through the Amazon Development Superintendence (Sudam), the government offered a series of incentives to those interested in producing in the region. However, subsidies were targeted at the most favored, such as entrepreneurs and industrialists. Despite the migratory wave, most of the land still belonged to the Union and the States.

However, a new phenomenon has affected people's lives: the sale and dispute over land. Land trade has become increasingly common, often without control or documentation. It was common for lots to be surrounded without proper military control. In 1976, the government promoted the first land regularization in the Amazon. A Provisional Measure allowed the regularization of properties of up to 60 thousand hectares that had been acquired irregularly, but "in good faith". This process, which ignored agrarian reform settlement programs, contributed to the unequal occupation of land and the emergence of large landownings (PEREIRA, 2015; TRECCANI, 2001).

In this context, the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) emerged in 1984, in the interior of Paraná, with the objective of drawing society's attention to the need for agrarian reform. The MST began to organize raids on large unproductive properties in the interior of the country. In Pará, the first actions took place in the south and southeast regions, in the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s. The MST initiated grassroots work, which brought together men and women, most of whom were in a situation of social exclusion. They were people from different places and social backgrounds, like squatters without title to land; small producers, owners or not, affected by the construction of hydroelectric plants; rubber tappers who suffered from deforestation that threatened their way of life; rural wage earners; residents of urban peripheries and retirees who saw in the access to land the possibility of an income supplement (MEDEIROS & LEITE, 2017, p. 29).

There were also prospectors from Serra Pelada. It was the final phase of mining, when many workers and their families were on the margins, moving to the peripheries of Curionópolis and Parauapebas, cities that suffered from population swelling and increasing rates of violence. “Paraguayo” (2020), who “lived precariously and without hope”, says that two members of the MST⁸ they went to Serra Pelada “to ask who wanted a land”. “I was one of the first to say that I wanted to. I couldn't take Serra Pelada anymore. The young men explained that it would be necessary to fight and that it would not be easy. Then I said: ‘Whoever survived here in this prospect, survives everything’”. The struggle for a piece of land seemed the only alternative to improve their living conditions.

“Garimpeiros” from Serra Pelada participated in one of the actions that can be considered a milestone in the implementation of the MST in Pará, as it served as an experience for the movement to adapt to a territory rich in mineral resources, the target of disputes over land and with high levels of violence. against peasants, in addition to having strong reaction power from the landowners and the military police. In July 1992, 548 families invaded the Fazendas Reunidas Rio Branco, in Parauapebas, central core of the Grande Carajás Program of the Vale do Rio Doce Company (CVRD). The eviction of the farm by the Military Police was immediate. As families entered the property, others were already being evicted. Despite the turbulent scenario, the MST demonstrated the capacity to establish material and symbolic conditions so that ex-miners, ex-farmers, cold-buoys, sharecroppers and farm workers to continue in the struggle for land.

The landless, moved by the feeling of indignation and injustice and by the desire not to submit to the landowning power, camped for five months at the headquarters of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (Incra), in Marabá, before returning to invade the Farms Reunited in Rio Branco in December of the same year. This new occupation resulted in the creation of two Settlement Projects (PAs): Palmares I, known as Palmares Sul; and Palmares II, called PA Palmares. At Palmares Sul, created on December 13, 2001, 327 families were settled, occupying an area of about 9,600 hectares. At Palmares II, regularized on March 11, 1996, 517 families remained in an area of approximately 14,900

⁸ “Paraguayo” refers to Onalício Araújo Barros and Valentim Silva Serra. Known respectively as “Fusquinha” and “Doutor”, they were murdered in Parauapebas, on March 26, 1998. The 22 accused of being the perpetrators of the crimes, among them nine farmers in the region, remain unpunished.

hectares. In total, Incra expropriated 36,471 hectares of the Fazendas Reunidas Rio Branco.⁹

Palmares II became an example of resistance and social struggle of the peasants for better working conditions, in addition to a space for multiple social relationships, exchanges of knowledge and solidarity, which contributed to the effort to solve problems such as unemployment and deficient health and education systems. "From the life of a prospector, hard and suffered, we arrived at that of settling in Palmares II. It was not easy. It was necessary to face violence ", says "Nicaraguense" (2020). He says that 25 years ago he didn't have a home or land to work and he didn't study either. "My father was a gold miner, he kept changing places. I entered the school when I was 10, 11 years old. Today, my 3-year-old daughter is studying. My brothers and I have a house and land to plant. My father is still working and survives on it. And we have access to technology, energy, water ". Also based in Palmares II, "Paraguay" (2020) reports the change in his life:

Misery made me leave Maranhão. Life in the country was hard. Without land, I always worked for farmers who paid little and exploited too much. I came to Pará in the late 1970s looking for a land, because they said there was a lot. I walked around several places, always working for the damn farmers. Until one day a friend told me about Serra Pelada. He said there were a lot of people going there because there was a lot of gold. I didn't even think twice. I took my whole family with me. Oh, my friend, if life was already difficult, it got even worse. With no mining experience, I went to work for the others, carrying gravel. He earned only to eat, and badly. I got malaria I don't know how many times. He worked with fever and tremor. The column spoiled. My family suffered. My children did not study and even the woman left me. In Serra Pelada, there was a lot of dispute and gold was not enough for everyone. Violence and death were common in CVs. Some were more fortunate and found gold, but spent it all on parties, brothels and drinking. Today I am here, in my little land. The woman did not return. I found another partner and I have contact with my children. Of everything, I have a little bit. But the most important thing is that I have dignity (PARAGUAYO, 2020).

Palmares II remains an alternative for welcoming migrants who arrive in Pará in search of work. In the settlement, the MST promoted the training of dozens of peasant leaders, currently involved in various forms of cooperation, associations and political

⁹ The Fazendas Reunidas Rio Branco belonged to the Lunardelli family, coffee growers in Paraná and São Paulo. In southern Pará, the Lunardelli owned about 400,000 hectares. They owned, for example, the Cia. De Terras da Mata Geral (Fazenda Santa Tereza), with 201,528 hectares, in Redenção; da Administração Agrícola Ltda. (NICOBAN), with 143,847 hectares; and the Fazenda do Companhia do Desenvolvimento do Sul S / A (CODESPAR), with 52,358 hectares, both in Santana do Araguaia (MOREIRA & PEREIRA, 2020).

struggles. The site, which has about 14,000 inhabitants, is also a point of resistance to the Grande Carajás Program, a mineral exploration project initiated by Vale in the 1970s-80s. The Carajás Project, as it is also known, extends over 900 thousand square kilometers, encompassing lands in Pará, Tocantins and Maranhão. The project, which operates in one of the largest mining areas in the world, has political and economic support from local, regional, national and international authorities and entrepreneurs.

Final considerations

If Sebastião Salgado's photograph showing a gold digger bravely defy the power of the military policeman can be read as an isolated act of insurgency, which proved to be unable at that time to mobilize other gold diggers in the fight against oppression, the performance of the Rural Workers Movement Landless (MST) managed to create conditions for former miners in Serra Pelada to have access to land and transform their living conditions. The testimonies of "Colombiano", "Nicaraguense" and "Paraguayo" are representative of this perception, confirmed by the fieldwork.

The research also indicates that the "garimpeiro", who is on the margins of the capitalist system, politically and culturally excluded, and whose work has historically been marked by oppression and subordination, played an important role in shaping rural settlements in the Amazon, especially in the southeast of Pará – a little fact highlighted by the literature on rural settlements in Brazil, including in the Amazon. In Palmares II, eight of the twenty respondents are ex-miners, which represents 40% of the respondents. Considering the conversation circles, the percentage of ex-garimpeiros rises to 50%. Most of them were in Serra Pelada. Something that is not surprising, since the presence of prospectors in the region is historic.¹⁰

It is also possible to consider that both the traditional populations and the Xikrin indigenous peoples of the Catete River and the inhabitants of rural settlements in the region live at the risk of losing territories, natural wealth and the family agricultural production provided by the region. The current environmental damage calls into question the social reproduction of these people and points to greater dangers with respect to the dams produced by Vale in the heart of the Eastern Amazon. However, new

¹⁰ The appearance of the "garimpeiro" figure dates back to the 18th century and is essentially linked to two factors: first, mining as an illegal activity, carried out by migrants in places of difficult access, in the middle of the forest; second, the existence of violent conflicts, arbitrariness, inequality and injustice in access and in the division of labor, which ignore small miners.

social actors, children of the pioneers of Palmares II, seek to continue the saga of their parents and ancestors in search of justice, peace and better livelihoods. It is up to social science researchers to contribute to give visibility to this process.

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RESUMO:

A proposta deste artigo é mostrar que Serra Pelada (1980-1992), o maior garimpo a céu aberto do mundo, mantém estreita relação com a formação de assentamentos rurais no sudeste do Pará. Para demonstrar que a epopeia dos garimpeiros e a luta histórica dos trabalhadores por um pedaço de terra estão relacionadas há mais de três décadas, são usados dois recursos: uma fotografia feita por Sebastião Salgado em Serra Pelada, em 1986, e depoimentos de ex-garimpeiros que hoje vivem em Palmares II, assentamento criado no município de Parauapebas, em 1996. A discussão tem como base o contexto sócio-político-econômico da fase final da ditadura militar e as primeiras ações do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) no Pará.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: resistência; narrativas camponesas; Serra Pelada; MST

RESUMEN:

El propósito de este artículo es mostrar que Serra Pelada (1980-1992), el tajo abierto más grande del mundo, tiene una estrecha relación con la formación de asentamientos rurales en el sureste de Pará. Para demostrar que la épica de los prospectores y la histórica lucha de los trabajadores por un pedazo de tierra ha estado vinculadas durante más de tres décadas, se utilizan dos recursos: una fotografía tomada por Sebastião Salgado en Serra Pelada, en 1986, y testimonios de ex garimpeiros que ahora viven en Palmares II, un asentamiento creado en en el municipio de Parauapebas, em 1996. La discusión se basa en el contexto sociopolítico-económico de la fase final de la dictadura militar y las primeras acciones del Movimiento de Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra (MST) en Pará.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Resistencia; Narrativas campesinas; Serra Pelada; MST.