

ECOSOCIALISM and SPIRITUALITY

Frei Betto and Michael Löwy

1) *In Memoriam*: They gave their lives for the Amazonian forest and the Peoples of the Forest: Chico Mendes and Dorothy Stang.

We would like to start our conference here at the World Social Forum of Belem with a homage to two personalities of high human quality, which gave their lives for the defense of the Amazonian forest, and the Peoples of the Forest: **Chico Mendes e Dorothy Stang**. They are the best known, the visible tip of the iceberg, of many other lives scarified in this unequal battle during the last decades. Inspired, each in his own way, by their religious faith, they struggled, to the last consequences, for the cause of the oppressed and the explored, which is, at the same time, inseparably, the cause of nature, of the forest, of life.

Chico Mendes (ML)

Educated in the liberationist Christian culture of the base communities, the young **seringueiro** (rubber-tapper) Francisco Alves Mendes Filho, born on December 15, 1944, discovered Marxism in the 1960's, thanks to a veteran Communist Euclides Fernandes Távora. In 1975, Chico founded, together with Wilson Pinheiro, the rural workers union of Brasilia and soon afterwards, in 1977, the union of rural workers of Xapuri, the town where he was born. It is during those years that he will begin using, with his comrades from the union, a form of non-violent struggle without precedent elsewhere: the famous **empates** (confrontation without winners). Hundreds of **seringueiros**, with their wives and children, would hold hands and confront, without weapons, the bulldozers of the big companies interested in deforestation. Sometimes the rubber-tappers were defeated, but often they were able to stop, with their naked hands, the caterpillars, bulldozers and electric saws of the forest-killers, wining, sometimes even wining the support of the laborers in charge of the deforestation. The enemies of the seringueiros and other peoples of the forest, are the **latifundistas** (big landowners), the agro-business, the wood-exporting companies, and the cattle-raisers – beef for export also – who want to bring down the trees in order to sell the wood and/or to replace the forest by pastures for cattle. A powerful enemy, which has its political branch, the so-called “Democratic Rural Union” (UDR) and its armed branch, the mercenary **jagunços** (hired gun-men); as well as numerous complicities at the Police, the Justice and the governments (local, regional and federal). During those years Chico Mendes began receiving his first death- threats; and soon enough, in 1980, his comrade of struggles, Wilson Pinheiro, will be murdered.

To build a larger force, Chico Mendes took the initiative to unite the seringueiros and other workers who lived from the forest by extracting nuts and other products, with the indigenous communities and various peasant groups, founding the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.

É nestes anos que o combate dos seringueiros e outros trabalhadores que vivem da extração (castanha, babaçu, juta) para defender a floresta vai convergir com o das comunidades indígenas e grupos camponeses diversos, dando lugar a formação da Aliança dos Povos da Floresta. For the first time, rubber-tappers and indigenous, who so many times have fought each other in the past, united their forces against the common enemy. Chico Mendes defined with the following words the foundations of this alliance: “never again one of our comrades will spill the blood of the others, together we can protect the nature, the forest, which is where we all learned to live, to raise our children and to develop our capacities, in a way of thinking in harmony with nature, with the environment, and with all beings which live here.”¹

Chico Mendes was perfectly conscious of the ecological dimension of this struggle, which interested not only the peoples of the Amazon, but all the world population, which depends on the tropical forest – the green lung of the planet.

¹ Discurso de Chico Mendes, citado por Ailton Krenak, coordenador da União das Nações Indígenas, in Chico Mendes, Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Xapuri, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores, S.Paulo, Janeiro de 1989, p. 26.

A pragmatic man of action, organizer and fighter, worried with practical and concrete issues – alphabetization, constitution of cooperatives, search for viable economic alternatives – Chico was also a dreamer and an utopian, in the noble and revolutionary meaning of the word. It is impossible to read without emotion his socialist and internationalist testament, dedicated to the future generations, published soon after his death by the union of Xapuri:

“Attention, young people of the future: September 6th of the year 2120, anniversary of the first centennial of the world socialist revolution, which unified all the peoples of the planet around one ideal and one thought of socialist unity, and which put an end to all enemies of the new society. Here remains only the remembrance of a sad past of pain, suffering and death. Forgive-me. I was only dreaming when I described these events which I won't be able to see. But I had the pleasure of having a dream”.²

In the 1980's he was able to achieve two important victories: the establishment of the first extractivist reservations – areas reserved exclusively for extractive activities (rubber, nuts, etc.) – in the state of Acre (Amazonian area); and the disappropriation of the Cachoeira plantation, belonging to the **latifundista** Darly Alves da Silva, near Xapuri. For the rural oligarchy, used, during centuries, to “eliminate” – in total impunity – those who dare organize the rural workers to struggle against the big landowners, he was “a guy signaled to die” (a well known expression used in the rural areas of Brazil). In December 1988, Chico Mendes is murdered, in front of his house, by gunmen hired by the Alves da Silva.

By his combination of socialism and ecology, agrarian reform and defense of the Amazonian forest, peasant and indigenous struggles, the survival of humble local populations and the protection of a heritage of humanity – the last great tropical forest not yet destroyed by capitalist “progress” – Chico Mendes's fight is an exemplary movement, which will continue to inspire new struggles, not only in Brazil, but in many other countries and continents.

Dorothy Stang (FB)

On February 2005, sister Dorothy Stang, aged 73, American missionary from the Notre Dame congregation, was assassinated with six bullets at short range, in the town of Anapu, at the Amazonian state of Pará. I met her in the 1970's, when I was preaching at a spiritual retreat at the state of Maranhão, on which she participated.

Dorothy's insertion in the land-conflicts of the Amazon started in 1982, when the Bishop Dom Erwin Krautler – also threatened with death – from the Xingu-river area, proposed her to work at the small town of Anapu, crossed over by the Trans-Amazonian Highway road, an area with the pharaonic projects of the military dictatorship left an heritage of misery and conflicts. “She wanted to dedicate her life to the poorest families living in miserable conditions. I suggested here the eastern area of the Trans-Amazonian road, the section between the towns of Altamira e Marabá. And there she went”, told the Bishop. Anapu had only 8 thousand inhabitants, but it was shot throw with land conflicts.

Since the 1980's, the deforestation intensified in that region, particularly in an area know as the “Land of the Middle”, aggravating the conflicts between **grileiros** (illegal big landowners) and big wood-companies on one side, and small peasants on the other. Inspired by Chico Mendes, Dorothy struggled for the creation of extractivist reservations. “The poor inhabitants were expelled from the land when some landowner arrived and pretended he owned that place”, tells Antonia Melo from the Amazonian Work Group of Altamira, state of Para, who used to be a friend of the murdered sister. Dorothy fought for projects of sustainable development and for the right of small producers to the land.

In June 2004, in Brasília, Dorothy testified before the Mixed Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Rural Violence, when she denounced impunity as an aggravating factor of the conflicts. Antonia considered Dorothy as “a woman committed to social justice, the environment and sustainable development”.

Dorothy was born on June 7, 1931, in Dayton (Ohio), USA. She came to Brazil as a missionary on 1966. In Coroatá, state of Maranhão, she worked with the ecclesiastic base communities composed mainly of small peasants. With the expansion of the **latifundium**,

² *Chico Mendes*, Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Xapuri, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores, S. Paulo, Janeiro de 1989, p. 34.

many families were forced to leave their lands, and migrate to the state of Para (Amazonian area), and Dorothy followed them.

Her support to communities based on family agriculture, oriented towards extractive activities with small environmental prejudice, provoked the ire of the **grileiros** and **latifundistas** of the region. When an area of Anapu was attributed to a project known as PDS - Sustainable Development Pole – the illegal landowners invaded the area and forced the families to leave.

The public prosecutor of the state of Para, Lauro Freitas Júnior, declared that he had no doubts that the landowner Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura, known as “Bida”, and the cattle-raiser Regivaldo Pereira Galvão, known as “The Crazy One”, made an agreement to pay for the murder of missionary Dorothy Stang. The Bishop Dom Tomas Balduino, president of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) says: “One has to look for the background of this murder. It is not only the issue of those who gave the orders, but of a whole rural structure, not only in the state of Para, but in the whole of Brazil”. The two main causes for crimes in the rural areas, such as the assassination of sister Dorothy Stang, are the traditional impunity of the landowners and the absence of a control on illegal ownership. One of the great social debts of the Lula government is the promised agrarian reform, which hasn't yet materialized.

On May 2008, the landowner Vitalmiro Moura, “Bida”, confronted with a Jury for the second time, was found “not guilty”. There is going to be an appeal. In the first judgment he had been sentenced to 30 years in jail. The hired gunman Rayfran das Neves Sales, who confessed his crime, was sentenced to 28 years in jail. This is another confirmation of a perverse aspect of the Brazilian judiciary system: those who are not poor enjoy immunity and impunity.

Rayfran das Neves, the killer, changed his testimony – on who gave the orders for the murder – 14 times! The continuous postponement of the trial helped building impunity. Local Juries are often favorable to landowners; the State secretary for Human Rights wants such emblematic cases of human rights violations to be tried at the Federal level, but the Supreme Court of Justice refused this for the case of Dorothy Stang.

The other landowner accused of the murder, the cattle-raiser Regivaldo Pereira Galvão – “The Crazy One” – after one year and three months in jail, benefited from a *habeas corpus* given by the Supreme Court of Justice, and since then has disappeared.

According to the Pastoral Land Commission, between 1971 and 2007, 819 persons were killed because of agrarian conflicts, only in the state of Para. Of these crimes only 92 were the object of a trial, and only 22 came before a Jury; finally, only six of the accused of hiring the killers were sentenced. None of them is in jail today.

2) The present ecological crisis, a crisis of civilization

The approaching catastrophe: global warming (ML)

The planetary ecological crisis, which is a crisis of civilization, has its most threatening expression in the phenomena of global warming. Result of the accumulation of greenhouse gases – mainly carbon dioxide – released on the atmosphere by fossil fuels - oil, coal – the process of climate change is a challenge without precedent in the history of humanity. What will happen if the temperature of the planet rises above 2° C? The risks are known, thanks to the works of the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: rise in the level of the seas, with the risk of submerging maritime towns, from Dacca in Bangladesh to Amsterdam, Venice or New York. Desertification in gigantic scale: the Sahara desert could arrive till Rome. Lack of drinking water. “Natural” catastrophes – hurricanes, inundations, etc. – with growing frequently and intensity. What will happen if the highly explosive methane gas, stocked in the deeps of the Oceans, is released into the atmosphere by a sudden rise in the temperature of the seas? One could continue with the list. At which temperature – 5, 6 or 7° C – will the planet cease to be inhabitable by our species? Unfortunately, we do not depose at the moment of a replacement planet in the existing universe known to the astronomers ... There exists a secret plan of the Pentagon: in case our planet becomes unviable, a special spaceship would take elite representatives – bankers, politicians, military – to the planet Mars. We are not invited to this trip ...

What is highly worrying is that this process of global warming is taking place at a much faster pace than predicted. The accumulation of carbon dioxide, the rise in temperature, the melting of the polar ice and of the “eternal snow” of the mountains, the droughts, the inundations: everything is happening very quickly, and the balance-sheets of the scientists, as soon as the ink of the documents has dried, appear already to optimistic. One doesn't talk anymore of what will happen by 2100, but of what is waiting us in the next ten, twenty, thirty years.

Who is responsible for this crisis, for the catastrophic process of global warming, of the planetary threat to life without precedent? It is the human being, answer the scientists: it is not a “normal” evolution of the climate, but the product of human activity. This answer – till today denied by a significant group of mercenary scientists, richly endowed by oil and coal companies – is correct, but too short: human being live on Earth for millennia, but the concentration of carbon dioxide has only become a danger in last decades. In truth, the responsibility for this process belongs squarely to the **world capitalist system**, an intrinsically **unsustainable** system.

The roots of the crisis: a civilization – Western capitalism – based on consumism, on commodity fetishism, on the unlimited accumulation of profit, of the conspicuous consumption of the elites. (FB)

Giving an absolute priority on capital accumulation over human rights or the ecological equilibrium, capitalism establishes, in the planet, a brutal social inequality and the devastation of the environment. Today, 80% of the industrial production of the world is absorbed by only 20% of the population, which lives mainly in the rich countries of the North.

The consumption pattern of the capitalist society is unsustainable and has a decisive role in the process of climate change. A great of part of this consumption is reserved to the conspicuous habits of a little oligarchy. According to the United Nations Program for Development, the sum of the rent in the hands of the 500 richer persons in the world is greater than that of the 416 million poorer ones. One multimillionaire gets more than one million people ...

The walls of the fortresses of the high-rent privileged are too high to permit the entrance of the multitude of excluded. But they are too fragile to prevent a risk of implosion. We have to search for an alternative to the present model of civilization. And this alternative implies, necessarily, a change in values, non-only in economic mechanisms.

If the world turns round the economy and the economy turns round the market, this means that the last one, invested with an idolatry character, floats in the sky, above human rights and the Earth resources. It presents itself as an absolute value. It decides on the life and death of nature and humanity. Therefore the ends – protection of the life in our planet, promotion of human happiness – are subordinated to the private accumulation of wealth. It doesn't matter that the wealth of a few requires the poverty of the many. The paradigm of the market is the big numbers of the bank accounts, not the dignity of the persons.

All human beings have the right to life, and, as Jesus insisted “a life in plenitude” (*John* 10, 10). How to make this viable? Any alternative must avoid the two models, which injured a significant part of humanity in the XXth century: the free market and the bureaucratic central planning. Neither one subordinated economy to the rights of the citizens. The market concentrates wealth in the hands of a small oligarchy. Bureaucratic planning, while implemented in the name of the people, excluded it from the decisions. The market aggravates injustice, and bureaucratic planning limits the exercise of freedom. Both are incompatible with the environment, and lead to the present dramatic global warming.

In order to overcome this blind alley, the economic logic must abandon the paradigm of private accumulation and recover the principles of common good and respect for the nature, so that citizenship becomes more important than consumerism, and the social rights of the majority to the conspicuous privileges of the minority.

The World Social Forum is a light appearing at the end of the tunnel, rescuing the hopes of so many activists who struggle for utopia, against a system that perceives bread as an exchange-value, as a commodity, and not a as a use-value, as a good necessary for our survival.

Rethink socialism requires not identifying it with the regimes that came down with the Wall of Berlin – as the history of Christianity cannot be reduced to the Inquisition. If we are

Christians, it is because Jesus' Gospel contains certain values, such as the sacred nature of each person, which by the way already condemns all that the Inquisition, represented.

An alternative proposal of society must start with concrete proposals, where political economy and ecology come together. One of the reasons for the brutal social inequality existing in Brazil – 75,4% of the national wealth in the hands of only 10% of the population, according to official statistics from May 2008 – is the neoliberal schizophrenia which separates economy from politics, and politics from social and ecological requirements. There can be no consolidation of democracy nor defense of the eco-systems in Brazil or in the world, if we are not able to confront this decisive challenge: eradicate social inequality.

The “market solutions”: the Stock-trade of Emissions (ML)

How does the dominant oligarchy confront the ecological problems, and in particular the burning issue of global warming? For many years, the greatest polluter and greenhouse gases-releaser of the world, the US under G. W. Bush, sided with “business as usual”, since “the American way of life is not negotiable” (**dixit** Bush). The consensual discourse of the system's spokesmen is “sustainable development”, a term used by the IMF, the World Bank and the G-8 governments. Unfortunately it is a formula without content, something the medieval scholastics called **flatus vocis**, empty talk; it is in fact a mere terminological concession to a public opinion increasingly worried with the ecological issue.

The most ecologically conscious sections of international capital, the European and Japanese dominant elites, came to an agreement to confront the greenhouse effect: the so-called Kyoto agreement – which Bush refused to sign (this may now change with Obama). Kyoto is supposed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the next 20 or 30 years, thanks to an absurd mechanism, typical of neo-liberal capitalism, the so-called “carbon trade”. The richer countries continue polluting the world and releasing CO₂, buying from the poorer countries the emission-rights which they did not use. Kyoto transforms the right to pollute in a commodity sold and bought at the stock market! This is the most advanced solution that the capitalist elite has been able to produce ... The emission-reduction goals for 2010, very modest – well below the minimum required, according to IPCC estimates, if one wants to keep temperature rise under the dangerous threshold of 2° C – were not attained, confirming therefore that the “carbon trade” scheme is perfectly inefficient.

The pseudo technological solutions. Example: ethanol (FB)

According to the official argument, the agro fuels would be an answer to the danger of global warming, replacing gasoline, one of the main sources for the greenhouse gases emissions. However, if one takes into account the carbon emissions resulting from the production – fertilizers, agricultural machines, factories – and transport of the so-called “bio fuels”, the difference with oil is not so great. It is in fact a false solution, with dramatic social consequences. The Greek prefix **bio** means life; **necro**, death. The fuel extracted from plants brings life?

One of the first consequences of the agro fuel is the accelerated rise in the price of food. Research by the OCDE and the FAO suggest that “biofuels will have a strong impact on agriculture during the years 2007 to 2016”. Agricultural prices have risen during the last 10 years. Grains have risen 20% to 50%. In Brazil people pay three times more for the food than in previous years.

With the agro fuel we're going to feed cars and starve people. There are 800 million cars in the world, and an equivalent number of people living under chronic undernourishment. It is very worrying that none of the governments so enthusiastic about the agro fuels questions a social model that gives absolute priority to the individual car – responsible for much of the greenhouse gases emissions – as if the profits of the automobile industry were sacred.

The prices of food have risen in Europe, China, India and the US. The ethanol **made in US**, produced from corn, doubled the price of this grain in one year. Since the market decides for everything, it happened in the US the same as in Brazil with sugar cane: the producers of soya, rice and other agricultural goods abandon their traditional products for the

new agricultural “gold”: corn in the US, sugar-cane in Brazil. This results in a rise in the price of soya, rice and the whole food chain, since the US exports half of the world grains.

Undernourishment threatens, today, 52,4 million Latin-Americans, 10% of the continent’s population. With the expansion of the areas reserved for the production of ethanol, there is a risk that this “bio fuel” will become a **necro fuel**, causing the loss of many human lives.

In Brazil, the expansion of sugar cane in the Southeast pushes the production of soya towards the North, towards the Amazon, inducing the deforestation of a region that has lost, in forest surface, the equivalent of ten times Portugal. Between 1990 and 2006, soya cultivation in the Amazon has increased by 18% year. Cattle-raising has increased by 11% a year.

Satellites of the INPE (National Institute for Spatial Research) found, from August to December 2007, that 3.235 km² of the forest had been razed. It is important to emphasize that the satellites calculations do not include forest-burning, only the cutting down of trees. Since they take into account only 40% of the destroyed area, the government himself calculates that some 7.000 km² have been erased. From the total carbon emissions of Brazil, 70% result from the burnings in the Amazon.

Until 2030, Brazil risks losing 21% of its forests, according to data from the Institute of Environment Research of the Amazon. If the present pace of deforestation continues, 670 thousand km² of the forest will disappear from the map, an area that is the equivalent of 22 Belgium’s. This means an inestimable loss in biodiversity and will increase global warming – the tropical forest is one of the last great carbon-sinks of the planet – with dramatic consequences for humanity as a whole.

Sugar-cane production in Brazil is historically known for the over-exploitation of labour, destruction of the environment and the undue appropriation of public resources. The sugar-mills concentrate land-property and produce monoculture destined to exportation. Bush and Lula’s enthusiasm for ethanol provoked a run of **usineiros** (sugar-mill owners) from all Brazil to seize available land: in less than four years, 300 thousand hectares of sugar cane were planted in former pastures or agricultural land.

The Brazilian government, before transforming the land in an immense sugar-cane plantation and dream with atomic energy, should give priority to renewable sources of energy, which are abundant in Brazil, such as hydraulic, solar and eolic energies. And take care of the hungry, before helping to enrich the **usineiros**.

3) A radical alternative: ecosocialism.

What is ecosocialism? (ML)

The dramatic ecological crisis requires **radical alternatives**, beyond capitalism. This is the ambition of **ecosocialism**, a current of thought and action that refers at the same time to the ecological protection of the environment and to the struggle for a socialist society, inspired by the values of freedom, equality and solidarity.

By breaking with the productivist ideology of “progress” – in its capitalist and/or bureaucratic forms – and by opposing itself to an unsustainable mode of production and consumption, whose logic of unbounded expansion has shown itself to be incompatible with the protection of nature, this current represents an original attempt to articulate the fundamental ideas of socialism – Marxist or libertarian – with the insights of ecological critique.

The narrow rationality of the capitalist market, with its short-sighted calculation of profits and losses, is intrinsically contradictory with an ecological rationality, which takes into account the long temporality of the natural cycles. There is no use opposing the “bad” ecocide capitalists to the “good” green capitalists: it is the system itself, based on the ruthless competition, the requirements of profitability, the running after the quick profit, which is destructive of the environment and responsible for the disastrous climate change.

Socialism means not only a change in the relations of production (collective instead of private propriety): the structure itself of the productive forces is contaminated by the logic of capital. Marx insisted, after the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, that the workers cannot take possession of the bourgeois state apparatus and put it at their service: they have

to break it and build a next form, radically democratic, of political power. The same applies, **mutatis mutandis**, to the productive apparatus: it cannot be just appropriated by the people, but must be radically transformed, by the development of new methods of production, which respect the health of the workers and the ecological equilibrium.

For instance: the energy – sources of the productive capitalist system are dangerous and poisonous. This applies both to the fossil energies – responsible for the global warming – or the atomic energy, a false alternative promoted by some governments; as we know, nuclear waste is a gigantic problem that so far nobody has been able to solve: millions of tons of highly toxic radioactive material, whose radiation can last hundreds or even thousands of years. The revolutionary transformation of the productive forces implies the use of renewable sources of energy compatible with the environment, such as the wind, the water, and above all, the sun.

Another challenge is to transform the pattern of consumption existing in capitalism, and, in particular, in the industrialized countries, which is totally unsustainable. If the whole humanity lived according to the American model of consumption, one would need five planets Earth to assure the production ... The kind of consumption of the capitalist system is based on the obsessive accumulation of goods, the compulsory acquisition of pseudo-novelty imposed by “fashion”, the commodity fetishism of the elites, while the mass of the people do not have access to the necessary minimum. A new society would orient production to the satisfaction of true needs, starting with those than can be defined as “biblical” – water, food, clothing, a roof – but including also the basic services: health, education, culture, transport, sewage. How to distinguish the authentic needs from the false and artificial ones? The last ones are fabricated by mental manipulation, by the dominant ideology, by the fetishism of commodity and, in particular, by **advertisement**. With the suppression of advertisement, the artificial needs – Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola! – will, step by step, loose their grip on people’s minds, permitting therefore the progressive emergence of a sustainable pattern of consumption.

From the ecosocialist viewpoint, a radical re-organization of the whole mode of production and consumption is necessary, based on criteria beyond the capitalist market: the real needs of the population and the protection of the environment. This means an economy of transition to socialism, where the population itself – and not the “laws of the market” or an authoritarian Political Bureau – decide, democratically, the priorities and the investments.

This transition would lead, not only to a new mode of production and to a more egalitarian, solidary and democratic society, but also to an **alternative way of life**, ecosocialist, beyond the kingdom of money, the artificial habits of consumption induced by advertisement, and the unlimited production of useless commodities.

Ecosocialism and spirituality: new values for a new civilisation (FB)

The alternatives to neoliberalism and the building of ecosocialism are born in social practice, through the popular struggles, the unions, peasant and indigenous movements, the ecclesiastic base communities, the black communities.

To find alternatives is a collective work. They do not come out of the head of illuminated intellectuals or ideological gurus. The important task is to strengthen the organization of the social layers that aspire to something else than the present reality: from peasants that dream of working on their own land until youth interested in protecting nature. Neoliberalism not only destroys communitarian institutions created by modernity, such as unions, social movements, and the democratic State. Its aim is the total atomization of society, reducing the persons to individuals disconnected from the social and political context where they live, and reduced to a mere consumer. This is the logic of total capitalism, a system that is able to commodity everything: culture, biodiversity, the environment, human organs, the genome, even our imaginary.

Without utopias, without hope, there can be no mobilizations. And without the possibility of envisaging a different, a new and better world, no hope can exist.

Hope favors the upsurge of new utopias, which have to be translated into political and cultural projects that signal a new society and, in her, a new woman and man. This requires rescuing ethical values, such as the sense of justice, practices of solidarity and sharing, and

respect for nature. It is a spiritual challenge, in the line suggested by the great Brazilian geographer Milton Santos: to give priority to the “infinite goods” over the “finite goods”.

This is the project of an ecosocialist civilisation, an alternative to capitalism and neoliberalism, able to incorporate concepts and practices of social equality and sustainable development, such as those of the Cuban Revolution, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, the MST (Landless Peasant Movement of Brazil) land occupations ... We have to include in our utopia, our project, our program, new paradigms, now emerging, such as ecology, indigenism, communitarian ethics, holism, solidary subjectivities, feminism, spirituality.

In the struggle for this utopia, one can take inspiration in the lives and actions, the social and spiritual values, the sacrifice and the dedication of people like Chico Mendes and Dorothy Stang.

The authors:

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Frei Betto is Dominican, advisor of social movements and writer. Among his books, **Batismo de Sangue (Baptism of Blood)** (2000), which inspired a film with the same name by Helvecio Ratton (2006).