



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Comissão Pastoral da Terra, CPT (Brazil)

Joint Award with MST (1991)



"...for their dedicated campaigning for social justice and the observance of human rights for small farmers and the landless in Brazil."

Jorge Marskell

Founded in 1975 to address the problems of unjust land distribution and violence in the countryside in Brazil, CPT's specific objectives are to interlink, advise and support all those involved in the service of landless workers and peasants to organise themselves and exercise basic rights such as those to land, freedom, justice; to contribute to the building of a real democracy through genuine land reform, respecting the environment.

Although CPT was founded as and remains a Roman Catholic institution, linked to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, it has also always had an ecumenical basis and works especially closely with the Lutheran Church, two ministers of which sit on its Executive Board. Liberation theology is a key inspiration for CPT workers, to the development of which they have also greatly contributed.

CPT is organised into a National Secretariat in Goiania and has branches spread over 20 states. It has a paid staff of 70 and there are about 40,000 volunteers, including nearly 1,000 church ministers and priests. Since its inception, CPT has helped to organise more than 350 rural unions and is advising more than 500. Lawyers associated with CPT have been involved in thousands of court cases in favour of rural workers. Up to the early 1990s, action through CPT had helped more than 150,000 families gain access to about 10 million hectares of land.

In 1983 CPT was a founder of the National Campaign of Land Reform. In 1985 the new civilian government of José Sarney passed a National Plan of Agrarian Reform with radical proposals for the expropriation and redistribution of land that was not 'fulfilling its social function'. But the land reform law has been watered down and timidly enforced.

Other CPT activities have included:

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- Support for sustainable development projects;
- A unique database about land-inspired human rights violations in Brazil;
- Popular education and mobilisation, including a mass signature campaign and pilgrimages in favour of land reform;
- Two alternative tribunals highlighting the crimes of big landowners
- Support for the encampment and settlement of landless peasants on unproductive land.

Experience has shown that only the mobilisation of the rural poor - as fostered in Brazil by CPT and the [Movement of Landless Workers, MST](#) (also a 1991 Right Livelihood Award recipient) - holds out any real prospect of change against the entrenched landowning elite.

Quotation

"We are witness to our people's creativity in the search for alternatives and their wanting to relate lovingly to the land. Because for them land is not a piece of merchandise, but rather a place and a condition of life. We know that by attaining land our people will gain citizenship and the possibility of an alternative way of living in an alternative society."

Jorge Marskell

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