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SOCIAL CONFLICTS

**REI DO GADO - AGRARIAN CHANGES AND “NEW CHARACTERS” ON
SCENE**

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We intend to reflect on the representation of transformations related to labor exploitation in Brazil through TV Globo's telenovela *O Rei do Gado* (1996). To this end, we focus on two “new” political characters who were important to the agrarian social processes during the time period in which the telenovela is set (between the 1950s and 1990s) and also at the time of its broadcast. These are temporary rural workers (known as “boias-frias”) and landless rural workers.

We selected episodes seven to twelve, which are part of the second week of broadcast and mark the beginning of the second part of the telenovela. This section highlights aspects related to the end of the settlement regime in São Paulo, where the plot is centered, and the transition to the exploitation of workers called “volantes” (temporary workers), who in the telenovela are

focused on the sugarcane economy. The main theme linking the representations of rural life in the second phase of *O Rei do Gado* is the conflict between ruralists and the Landless Workers' Movement, as well as the political disputes surrounding agrarian reform.

The latter are presented in the plot as southern settlers who lost their land due to bank debts and joined the social movement, which was in full swing at the time. In this regard, we highlight that the episodes analyzed were aired two months after the episode that became nationally known as the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre, in which 21 landless workers were murdered by the Military Police of the State of Pará.

Our analysis focuses on visual and textual aspects of the narrative. Our analytical choice is based on the view of the telenovela as a uniquely Brazilian genre and in dialogue with literature, especially with regard to the representation of rural life.

Palavras-chave: labor exploitation; social movement; telenovela.