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**THE LONG MARCH OF THE PEASANTRY AND THE "NATURE-OBJECT":
CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN THE BRAZILIAN
COUNTRYSIDE**

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The development of capitalism in the Brazilian countryside is an intrinsically unequal and contradictory process, marked by a heterogeneous expansion that articulates wage labor and peasant production. This article examines how the national agrarian structure has been shaped by a specific form of rentier capitalism, defined by the fusion between urban industrial capital and large landownership. Rather than following a classical path of agrarian modernization, this process transformed urban elites into major landholders operating under a dual logic: advanced labor relations prevail in industrial activities concentrated in the Center-South, while coercive and precarious relations persist on rural properties located in frontier regions such as the Amazon. Within this system, land is treated as a “special commodity,” functioning simultaneously as a store of value and as collateral for financial accumulation, thereby sustaining extensive

unproductive latifundia. Although peasant holdings occupy only around 20% of total land area, they employ approximately 70% of the rural workforce, revealing a profound mismatch between land concentration and social productivity. This accumulation regime is legitimized by the modern conception of “nature-as-object,” which desacralizes the environment and reduces it to a pragmatic resource to be dominated and exploited. Such rationality underpins the advance of capital across rural territories, fragmenting space in the name of productivity and generating systematic expropriation, violence, and the erosion of non-capitalist social relations with the land. In this context, the Brazilian peasantry’s “long march,” exemplified by movements such as the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST), emerges as both a refusal of proletarianization and a strategy to reclaim territory, time, and conditions of social reproduction lost through a long history of exclusion. The article concludes that agrarian reform remains an urgent political necessity. Far from residual, it is central to confronting Brazilian rural inequality, democratizing land access, and ensuring land fulfills its social function.

Palavras-chave: peasantry; land concentration; capitalism; nature; social movements.