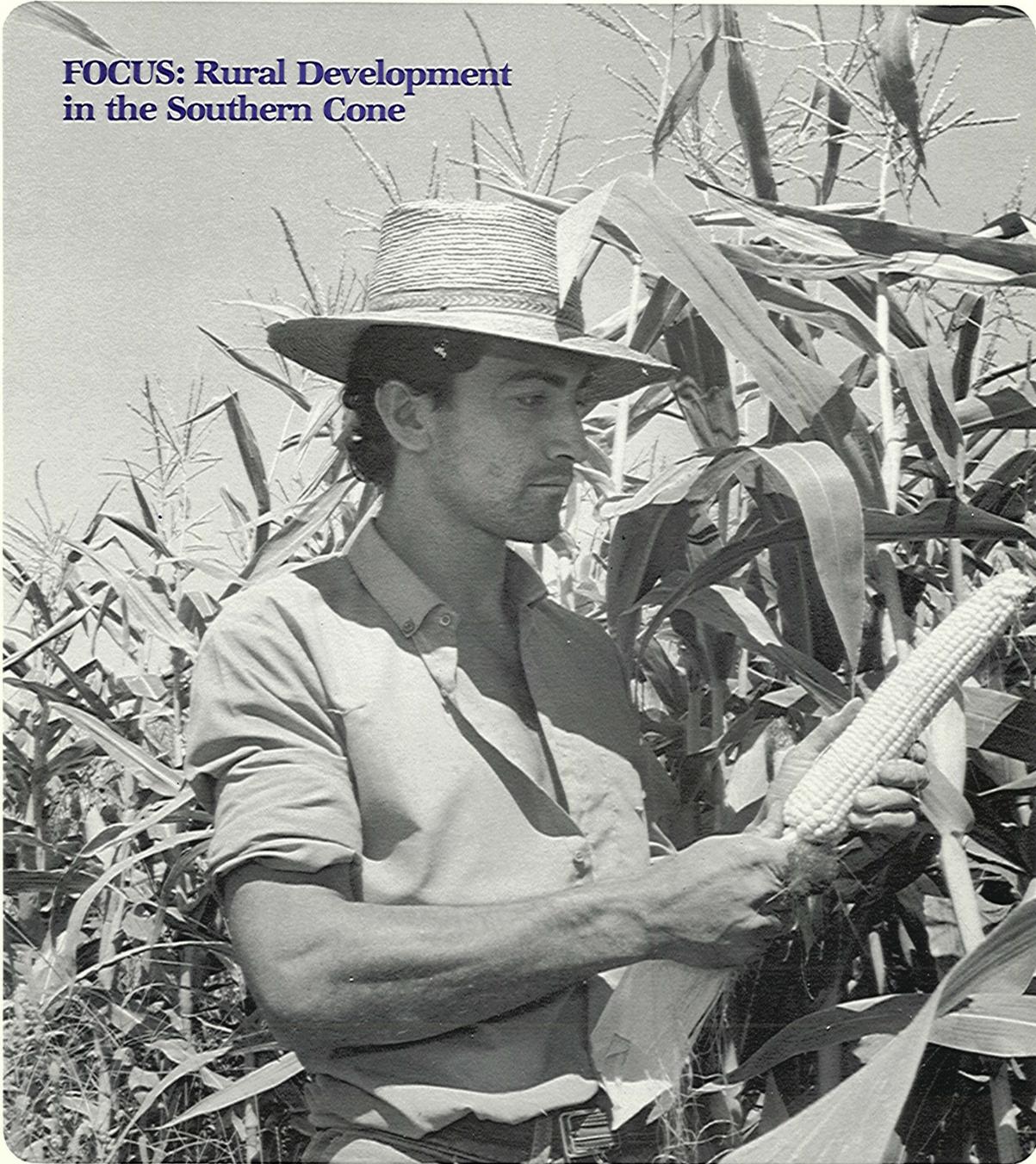


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grassroots development

JOURNAL of the INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION

**FOCUS: Rural Development
in the Southern Cone**



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Cover photo: A farmer examines his corn crop near Peumo, in Chile's Cachapoal Valley (see article p. 24). Photo by Miguel Sayago.

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INTO ANOTHER JUNGLE

The Final Journey of the Matacos?

Ariel Dorfman

As a child, one of my friends thought the Matacos were some sort of animal. He had been brought up on a sugar mill in the province of Tucumán, Argentina, where at night the adults would tell stories. One story dealt with something called Matacos, which were hunted down by the hundreds in the jungles of the Gran Chaco forest. He remembered, above all, an evening when a guest of his father related how Matacos had been picked off one by one by soldiers from the back of a moving train. This confirmed his impression that the victims were monkeys or other wild beasts.

That idea persisted until several years later. One morning he went out into the yard and saw his grandmother standing in front of two small, bronze-faced children, an impassive brother and sister. With a pair of large scissors, she began to shear off their black, dirty hair. "These Matacos," she announced, "are full of lice. This is the only way to get rid of them."

It was only then that my friend realized that the Matacos were Indians.

□

There is a vast region in the Argentine province of Chaco, some two million hectares of dry scrub forest, known as El Impenetrable. I found nobody who could fix the date when the phrase first came into use, but everybody agrees that it describes no ordinary jungle. A thick, intertwined bramble of vegetation stretches densely for miles, with an occasional solitary tree jutting above the low bush, to form a suffocating wall of thickets you can neither enter without a guide nor leave alive were that guide to abandon you.

But it is not the forest alone that isolates the zone. The land cannot absorb all the water that flows into it. Water from the sky during months of rain. Water swelling from rivers that are fed by the remote Andes when they thaw, rivers overflowing their boundaries and changing course unpredictably. For days, often weeks, the roads are cut off—they can be navigated for miles as if they were narrow lakes. Afterward, withering months of dry heat, even of drought, will come, but that does not matter—the local people know that soon enough they will have more water than they know what to do with.

Most people would find such a place, alternating between swamp and arid scrubland, not only impenetrable but, frankly, uninhabitable. What to others is inhospitable and menacing is to the remaining Matacos—15,000 of the

extant 23,000 are concentrated in this area—a last refuge and, perhaps, a last opportunity to survive.

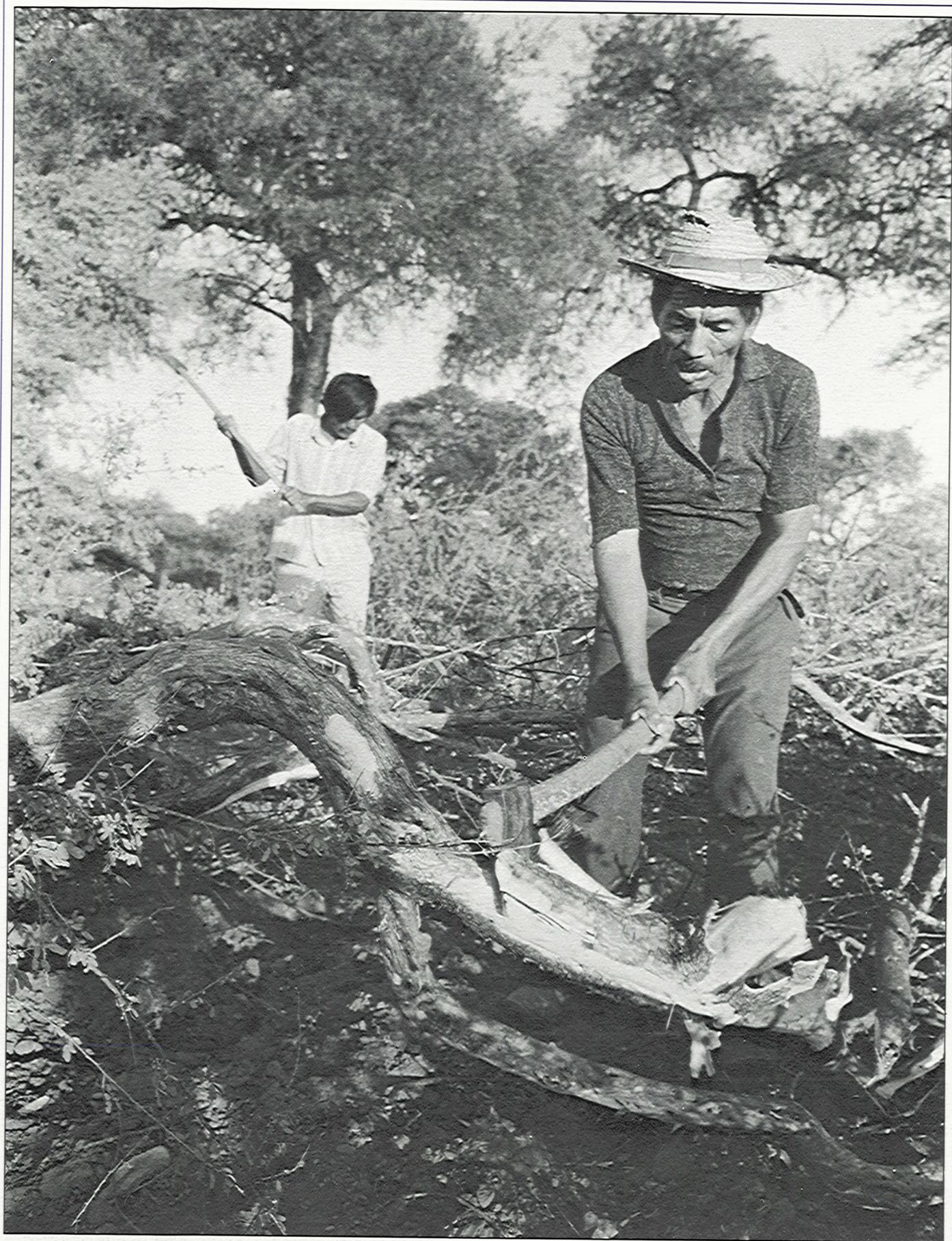
It is here, on the northern frontier of El Impenetrable, bordering the brown, muddy currents of the tumultuous Bermejo River, that the village of El Sauzalito lies. It is here that a remarkable experiment is being carried out to try to save a people from extinction.

□

In 1879, at the exact moment when the Indians in the United States were being massacred by superior firepower, Julio Roca, then Argentina's minister of war and soon to be its president, defined a new strategy toward the Indians who still controlled vast territories of the republic. "It is necessary," he said, perhaps thinking of the newly invented Remington rifle, "to directly search out the Indian's hiding place and make him submit or expel him." The resulting offensive against the Indians of the Pampas was known as *La Campaña del Desierto* (the Campaign of the Desert), and it all but exterminated the nomadic warriors who roamed the rich, fertile plains that were needed for grazing cattle and raising wheat. At the same time, though with less resources and urgency, the Gran Chaco (called the Green Desert) was conquered, and the remaining tribes of Indians were pushed back. This culminated, finally, in the expedition to the river Pilcomayo in 1912 and the massacre that was probably at the source of those stories my friend once heard around the bonfire in Tucumán.

The Matacos have their own version of what happened. Andrés Segundo is a 54-year-old Mataco who learned how to write 40 years ago. One of the first things he wrote down was his grandparents' memory of that expedition against his people, a recollection repeated today by his own children and grandchildren. He reads from his notebooks, and because his words are difficult to follow, I try to understand better by focusing on the print. Though the words are Spanish, the small, scrubby letters look almost indecipherable. As his fingers trace the hieroglyphics across the page, his voice is slurred, repetitive, incantatory.

Opposite: A Mataco farmer clears tall, ax-breaking quebracho trees from his land in El Impenetrable, a vast isolated region in Argentina's Chaco Province. It takes one man nine months to clear a single hectare of this hardwood.



Mitchell Denburg



Left: A farmer tends an abundant crop, which was planted on freshly cleared land. Right: A Mataco woman and child harvest potatoes. Nomadic people to whom agriculture was almost totally foreign 15 years ago, the Matacos now avidly grow cotton and vegetables.



We did not know where those soldiers came from or why. They found where the aborigines [the Matacos never use the words "Indians" or "natives" to refer to themselves] lived and came with rifles, with bullets, beating people up. The Matacos went into the monte [the bush]. There was one woman with a child. She was hurt. She threw the child away. That is what my grandfather told me. They hunted the aborigine as if he was a tiger. . . . We were not harming anyone. We lived from the land, gathering the things that belonged to nobody. I do not know why the soldiers came.

The reason is, in fact, quite simple. They came because by then Argentina was producing goods for export to foreign markets—and a lot of Indian land was there for the taking. "The settlers would come," Manuel Fernández, another Mataco chronicler, told me, "and ask for permission to clear land or settle down. They might give the tribe a cow." The Indians interpreted this as a gesture of gratitude. The settlers understood that they had bought the land. To the Matacos, that was absurd: How could you sell the land? The Army arbitrated the disputes.

Their territory began to dwindle—but even so, the Matacos were not to be left alone on what remained. The Argentine economy needed not only their land—but their bodies as well.

Andrés Segundo has also recorded this event. His uncle told him of the day that a stranger arrived. He had been sent by the owner of a remote sugar mill in search of field hands to cut cane. The long journey that followed is recorded on yellowing scraps of paper—how they walked for a month, whole families, until they reached the train. Andrés Segundo tells the tale in a monotone, almost without emotion, as if these catastrophes were natural and not manmade. It rained along the route, it seems (I write "it seems" because the details are blurred, as if it were still raining and there were mud on the words them-

selves). The little ones cried from the cold. A terrible wind swept down, trees fell, people were killed.

That was to be the first, but not the last, trip. Trapped in a system of debt bondage, increasingly dependent on manufactured goods, the Matacos kept returning to the sugar plantations (cotton would come later). Part of the year they were seasonal workers, hiring out for low wages and cheap merchandise; the rest of the time they hunted and fished, and ate fruits and berries.

But even this divided, miserable life was endangered. By the 1960s, fewer workers were being hired—the era of mechanization had set in. (On the plane back from the Northeast, I happened to sit next to a major Argentine cotton exporter. Texas Instrument in hand, he calculated, for my benefit—punching plus and minus buttons, doling out percentages—how mechanization had made the migrants increasingly obsolete.)

The Matacos found themselves in a precarious situation. The monte was eroding, animal species were disappearing, the ecological equilibrium of the region had been fractured, wages were insufficient. ("There was no work," Andrés Segundo explained, "but we had to eat anyway.") Along with malnutrition, diseases like tuberculosis, Chagas, and parasitosis became prevalent. Infant mortality rose.

As the 1970s began, the future looked still bleaker for the Matacos. They had survived natural floods and disasters for centuries, but they could not withstand the manmade flood of modern civilization. Like so many other contemporary tribes of aborigines, the Matacos seemed bound for extinction.



There was no road to El Sauzalito 12 years ago. Had you been able to get there, you would have found a scattering of thatched huts in the middle of a clearing over-

grown with weeds. Remove the steel machetes, some clothing, a couple of bottles and tin cans, and you might have thought you were visiting the Stone Age.

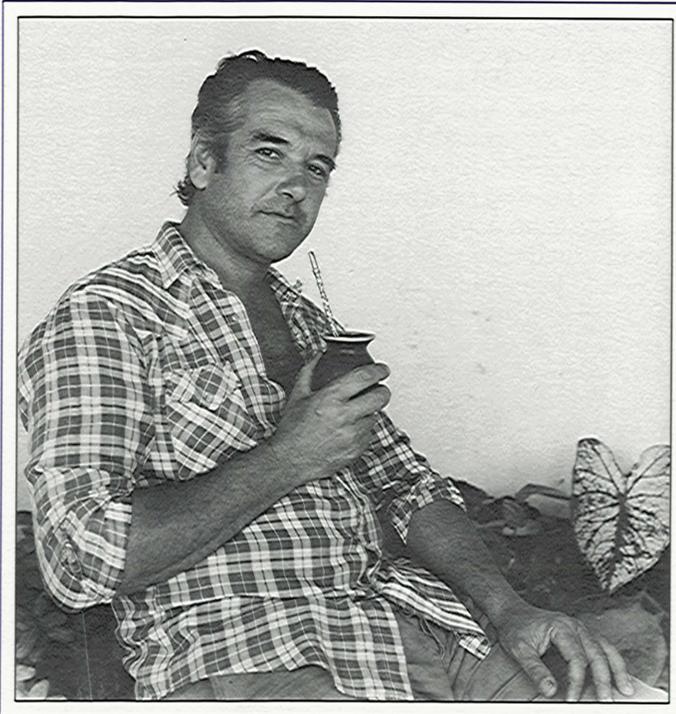
Today El Sauzalito is connected by a dirt road to Castelli, 200 miles away, and by radio to the outside world. In the center of the town is a plaza, with benches, planted flowers, gravel pathways. Nearby is a bungalow where the elected mayor and aldermen meet, along with an office for the justice of the peace and a civil registrar. A hospital, a grade school, and a high school have been built. Most, though not all, of the inhabitants live in brick houses. And there is electricity.

More important, instead of losing population, El Sauzalito is growing. Couples are marrying, children are being born. I met several young men who had left to log trees but were now returning home for good. The movement is centripetal, not centrifugal as before.

Just a few miles away, you can still find small settlements that remind you of El Sauzalito's recent past: sparse collections of huts barely differentiated from the surrounding monte. But the real distance is not measured in miles. To transform El Sauzalito, thousands of hours of energy have been expended by the Matacos, and resources have poured in from the outside. If the resources were to dry up, if the Matacos were to sink into apathy, this new version of El Sauzalito would probably slip back in time, slip away into the waiting overgrowth, and once again begin to die.



At the beginning of this century, a doctor by the name of Maradona wrote a book, *Através de la Selva* (Crossing the Jungle), in which he narrates his visits to various Indian communities of the Gran Chaco. "The Indian," he



Miguel Sayago

Diego Soneira, an outsider who came to stay, was convinced that the Matacos needed to become legal owners of their land so they would never again be expelled from it.

writes of the Mataco, "speaks softly and is even gentle in the way he treats you, but his savage, suspicious, and egoistic nature quickly prevails." On other pages, he mentions their criminal personality, their readiness to destroy. Other adjectives he uses are "indolent," "decadent," "ridiculous," "sanguinary."

The Argentine Constitution, of course, uses none of these words to describe the Indian. But by mandating that the Indian be converted to Catholicism as a way of guaranteeing peace (Article 67, Item 15), it legally affirms the inferiority of native civilization and culture and denies Indians the right to their own beliefs. It is not surprising, therefore, that a 1978 decree put the undersecretary for Indian affairs also in charge of the welfare of minors, the elderly, and the handicapped.*

Indians are lumped together with those who are not adults, with those who have already lived out their usefulness and are waiting for death.



When Diego Soneira arrived in El Sauzalito in 1973 as the representative of the Instituto del Aborigen, a sort of Bureau of Indian Affairs, he had already spent several years working in the area and was convinced that only a dramatic alteration in their way of life could save the Matacos. They had been, until then, constantly on the move, either as nomads in the jungle or as migrants on the plantations. Neither form of subsistence offered any guarantee of stability. What the Matacos needed was to become the legal owners of their own land so they would never again be expelled from it. But this meant they had to till that land and become sedentary.

This was not going to be easy. Though they had learned something about growing subsistence crops from the outreaches of the Incan empire many centuries ago and later picked up a bit more from the whites, the Matacos were primarily hunter-gatherers. What had taken the human race many thousands of years, the Matacos would have to achieve in a generation.

Soneira, however, was not the kind of bureaucrat who comes to visit the poor or the Indians armed with theories and suggestions that others must enact and then leaves for a comfortable home. He knew that if this change were to have any chance of success, it would have to be carried out by the Matacos themselves and could not be imposed from the outside. And he knew this meant accompanying the Matacos, living as they did. A former priest who lost none of his missionary zeal when he gave up the priesthood, Soneira arrived in El Sauzalito to stay. Six other white people—experts in health, agriculture, education—joined him, among them his new wife, Nene, and her mother, Clemencia Sarmiento, known to one and all from then on as Mami.

Of course, the Matacos were suspicious. They had no way of knowing that Diego was different from the other white men who had brought ambitious proposals and then went away richer than when they arrived and certainly better off than the Indians who they left behind. In their first meeting with Soneira—which has assumed a sort of legendary, almost foundational status in the

*Editor's note: Since this article was written, new legislation was passed in 1987 that calls for sweeping reforms in the treatment of Indians in Argentina. (See box on page 12.)



Mitchell Denburg



Miguel Sayago

The Matacos have gone from hunter-gatherers to farmers in less than a generation. Top: A farmer harvesting his onions, a new cash crop. Above: Farmers with a recently purchased irrigation pump. Assistance from the Asociación Promotores Chaco (APC) is helping the Matacos develop their own agricultural projects.

memory of El Sauzalito and is now narrated in a confused tangle of versions—eight Matacos were ready to cooperate; 150 others opposed his presence. (Each Mataco I spoke to included himself among the eight.) What is clear is that, in spite of a majority who wanted to refuse them entry, the group managed, after hours of discussion during a deluge, to pitch three tents in the middle of the bush, in the exact spot where the central plaza now proudly stands. As the days slipped by, Soneira and his companions gradually won the confidence of the Matacos, though he would be expelled twice from the town when they did not receive everything they wanted. Soneira eventually created the Asociación Promotores Chaco, which brought in outsiders to help the Matacos develop agricultural projects. Today, there are 40 *promotores* throughout El Impenetrable.

To focus only on the outside advisors, however, is unfair to the many Matacos who had concluded on their own that they were heading for a dead end. Without these Matacos, Soneira's plans would never have worked.

Ernesto Reynoso, for one, the *cacique*, or chieftain of the Matacos, had watched his people's situation deteriorate year by year. Like Soneira, he had come to believe that land ownership was the best hope for the Matacos. Nobody had elected Reynoso to his post; no other candidate wanted the job. While he may tend to exaggerate his own role ("I made this place; I am the *tata*, the big father of this place; I am the authority here"), all agree that he was indispensable. Over the years, he was to prove himself a

wily advocate: tirelessly pestering authorities to exact promises of aid, then knocking on doors to hold them to those promises. A stubborn rock of a man, he knew that if aid were to be continued, his people would have to show results. Behind him and beside him, therefore, stand many other Matacos. His pride in what has been accomplished is their pride. "These are the machines that did everything," he says, lifting up his arms. "And these legs, they did the walking. Everything you see—the plaza, the hospital, the fields—we made it all."

His great-grandfather did not know a word of Spanish. He lived off the honey and the iguana and the fish. With machete, pickax, and shovel, his grandfather helped to build the railroad from Formosa to Salta. His father was a *bracero* on the plantations. Reynoso himself began to pick cotton when he was five years old. His wife died on one of those monthlong treks to the cotton fields.

"Someday," he told me, "we will have Mataco doctors. Who knows? Perhaps someday my grandchild will pilot a plane."



But the confluence of these two streams—the whites devoted to the Matacos and the Matacos' faith in themselves—might have been insufficient if another sort of downpour had not taken place. In 1975, the Argentine military overthrew the government of Isabel Perón.

How ironic that this event would help the Matacos, who when they vote at all, tend to vote Peronist. The military government, as history has shown, was not overly interested in helping those who lived on the margins of society. Obsessed with security, however, they worried that the Gran Chaco was so underdeveloped and isolated that it would be vulnerable to foreign attacks. And the very notion that something "internal" could also be "impenetrable" was an insult to the geopolitical, macho pride of the military.

The armed forces therefore supplied an enormous quantity of resources to the region, most quite useless. In the middle of the jungle, for instance, in an area with few natives, a small concrete town was built from scratch, replete with telephone lines, satellite-dish television, and air-conditioned buildings staffed by government employees with nothing to do all day but wait for the next showcase visit.

But in El Sauzalito, funds could be used for plans that were already underway. Thus when the governor of the province came for a visit and noted that a great deal had already been accomplished with little outside support, he offered Diego Soneira the post of mayor, or *intendente*. Though the military government's national policy ran directly counter to his own democratic ideals, Soneira saw the chance to further develop the area, pay the promoters' salaries, and channel municipal money into essential infrastructure.

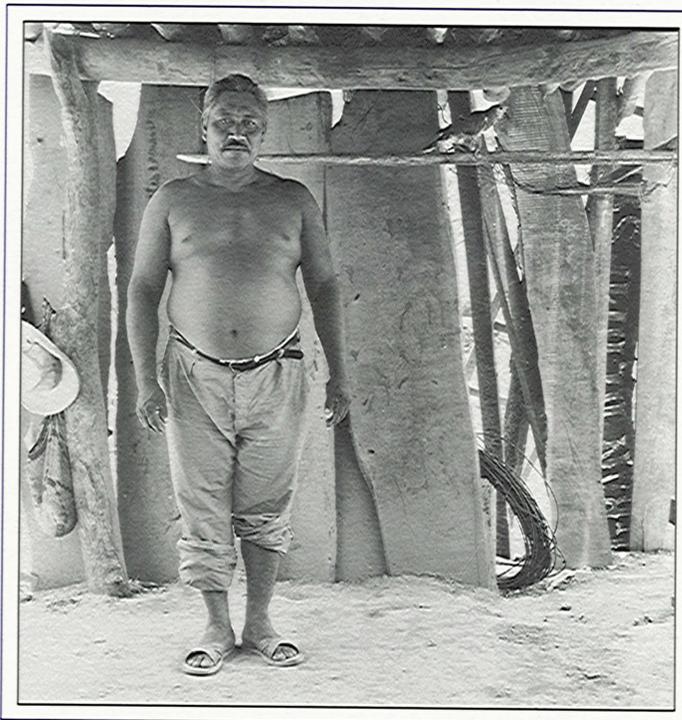
As Soneira reports it, he told the governor that there were two ways to approach the development of El Impenetrable. One alternative was to see it as an enormous enterprise. "In that case," he said, "your purpose is to make money, and you exploit things to produce an immediate benefit. Or you can see a vast school here. This means that, like any form of education, you will run a deficit in the short run, with the benefits coming many

years from now. I am not an entrepreneur. If you want me and my people to work here, we must be allowed to make this place into a school that will give the Indians a chance to learn how to live on their own and not be condemned to live off welfare forever."

The governor, surprisingly, agreed.



It was inevitable that someday the vast school of and for the Matacos would run into trouble because this effort is made up of two separate, and one might almost say contradictory, learning processes. The first, which has had priority until now, is to modernize the Mataco economy, allowing its members to cope with an overwhelming for-

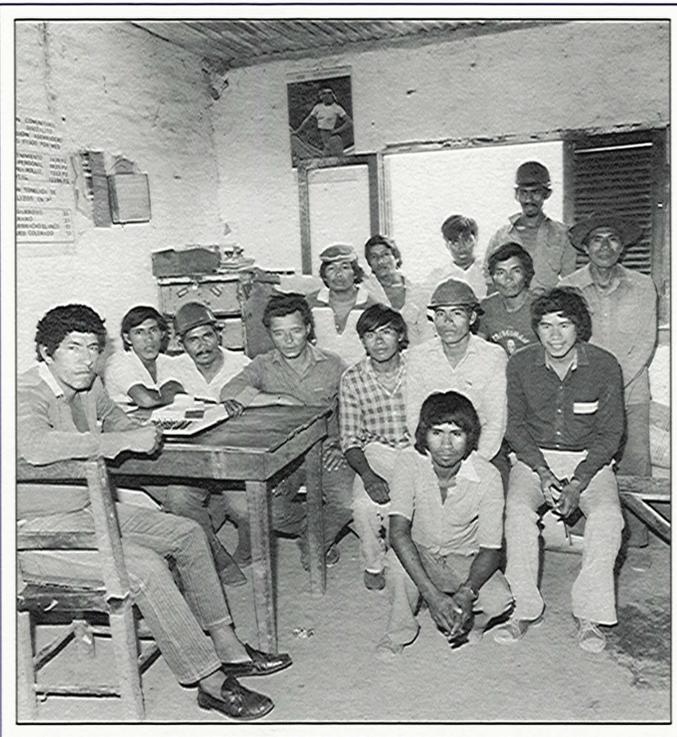


Miguel Savage

Ernesto Reynoso, the cacique, or chieftain, of the Matacos. A stubborn rock of a man, he knew if outside aid were to continue, his people would have to show results.

eign civilization that technologically and organizationally is far more powerful than theirs. The second, which was only implicit and thus far has found no institutional expression or funding, is to help the Matacos save their identity and sustain what makes them unique as they become integrated into a world whose rules they did not make.

The problem is that to become modern and have an economic base of their own, the Matacos must break their traditional patterns of social organization. For hunter-gatherers, Nature is the provider: The future depends on reading the natural world carefully, not on the systematic planning of one's work. You collect enough to last for a brief period, and when that stock has been depleted, you go out and get more. Such a culture does not conceive of the idea, for example, that a crop can be ruined if you leave the fields for a week, that there are such things as capitalization, or credit to be repaid. The future is really not in one's hands. "This may happen," the Matacos told



Mataco Indians discuss how to manage their resources at a committee meeting of the Asociación Comunitaria in El Sauzalito.

me. "And then again, perhaps it may not."

Nor are the Matacos accustomed to fulfilling collective obligations. Formerly in their community, each family could leave without permission. Decisions were not made by a majority and imposed upon a minority. This is a perfectly logical structure if the renewable forest is always there—but it invites disaster if the earth must be worked, tractors allocated, seed and fertilizer distributed, if survival depends on taming Nature through mutual cooperation.

The Matacos have been relatively successful in this venture. This is evident in the number of buildings and facilities, in the increased standard of living, in the many hectares (still insufficient) now under irrigation, in the crops exported and the timber sold, and above all, in their capacity to organize. They control and regulate their own economic activities through the Asociación Comunitaria, with a subcommission for each industry—agriculture, lumber, tree-felling, repair work, and soon, fishing. The association allows the Matacos to plan their work, distribute the benefits, do the accounting, discuss and solve their difficulties.

The promotores, to be sure, are still on hand with suggestions, expertise, techniques—as an unavoidable bridge to a confusing outside world—and they may remain until a new generation is educated. Yet, the Matacos are obviously weaving their uncertain way to relative autonomy.

Achieving this first educational objective, however, has forced the Matacos to deal with the second, which has been perpetually postponed. The promotores did not initiate this experiment as a way to painlessly ingest one more aboriginal tribe into the stomach of the 20th century. The idea was that the Matacos should modernize without losing their values and perspectives, their own culture.

The difficult question, of course, is the same one that is heard in many other places in the Third World: "Can it be done?"



The day I arrived in El Sauzalito, a little Mataco girl had just died. She was the sixteenth child to die in the last four months.

A few hours later, I met the doctor who at the time was supposedly in charge of the community's health. I had heard vague stories about him—a man who turned away the sick if they called outside the regular schedule, a man who did not visit the other communities, a man who supposedly had said that the only way to make an Indian work was to fire a couple of shots at him. But even those stories did not prepare me for the person who swaggered through the door. He began by verbally abusing the whole experiment: It was, he said—his eyes protruding from a thin, bony face—"a total failure." Instead of advancing, the Matacos were going backwards. He branded the recent decision to plant cotton as ludicrous and stated that what was needed was a *criollo* landowner to establish some order. Finally, he turned around, crouched slightly, and using his buttocks as a metaphor, wiped them with his hand to show how worthless he considered everything.

"Why are you here then?" I asked.

His answer chilled me. "I am not human," he said. Perhaps he meant "humanitarian"—but the word he may have used mistakenly suited his manner quite well. "I didn't come here to save anybody, but for my own benefit. I'm almost 60. If I had retired as an ordinary doctor, I would be a beggar. That's why I agreed to come to this place. So I could retire with the pension of a hospital director."

I would not mention the doctor except that he personifies, in my opinion, two undeniable facts about the Mataco condition. First, many outsiders come to such places not to help those who live there but to help themselves. Second, and perhaps more significantly, the Matacos had been trying to get the doctor replaced ever since he arrived three years earlier. They had received repeated assurances that he would soon depart, but there he sat, symbol of all the things—far too many things—that the Matacos do not control and yet are essential to their well-being. The Matacos can do little about the world economic crisis or that of the Argentine economy—even though these crises mean that their products fetch lower prices, that inflation eats up their benefits, and that subsidies and services become even scarcer.

The apparent hostility and complexity of the outside world creates among the Matacos an added dependency on the external buffers that protect and benefit them. Without the promotores or outside aid, the Matacos could not have begun their journey toward autonomy; but now they tend to think of those factors as permanent. With some embarrassment, wherever I went, I had to submit to a long litany of needs and petitions and complaints, as if each person were demanding that I solve his problems.

This is not, of course, unique to the Matacos. The dilemmas of paternalism and dependency are present in most development projects. It is not my purpose to explore here how those problems can be overcome. What does matter at this point is to note that if all power—both

evil and good—seems to come from outside, then the Matacos' sense of self-worth is weakened. Everything they learn tells them that the road to autonomy, the road to success, passes through the abrogation and eradication of their past identity.



The anthropologist Edward Spier, in his classic study of the Yaqui Indians, coined the phrase "enduring peoples" to designate those human groups who have "experienced incorporation into nation-states, and have existed within or outlasted nation-states." He examines "the Cataláns and Basques of Spain; the Welsh and the Irish, formerly of Great Britain; the Cherokees, the Hopis, and the Senecas of the United States; the lowland Mayas of Mexico; and finally, the Jews of many different states."

In all of these cases, he finds that a people will persist—despite drastic changes in genetic constitution, place of residence, language, customs, and beliefs—if they continue to hold a common identity, that is, a stock of symbols and experiences that allow them to have a common understanding of the world and of their relationship to other cultures. Peoples who are unable to maintain the consciousness of their ethnicity are unable to remember their past collectively or use it to interpret the present and will probably be absorbed.

Can the Matacos endure?

Do they have within their culture the resilience and flexibility to go through the rites of modernization without disintegrating as an independent cultural entity?

There is at this point no way of telling for sure. What



I saw and heard was not overly encouraging.

In 1944, the Matacos were converted to Christianity by missionaries of the Anglican Church. For the first time, the Indians received some elementary education, health care, and protection from the incursions of the army and the white settlers who would often kill a Matakos or two for fun. But the Indians were also taught to forget their own legends and stories, to feel ashamed of their past, and to stop dancing and singing their traditional music.

I asked the Matacos I met to tell me stories and myths from their past. They either pretended not to understand my question or told me they could not remember. When I repeated several legends or described beliefs about the dead and their spirits—things I had read in collections edited by foreign anthropologists—people nodded, agreeing that these were stories they knew. They did not, however, admit to telling their own children these tales, to sharing that body of sacred law that contains moral guidance and the threads of communal identity. Some promoters told me that something similar happens with songs and dances: The Matacos sing hymns at church, but the old instruments and melodies are being put aside and forgotten.

The only Matakos I met who was prepared to recount and discuss the old myths was—strange as it may seem—Ernesto Avendaño, the Anglican pastor of El Sauzalito. Perhaps he was sure enough of the divine origins of his own beliefs to be able to admit knowing those stories. He explained, in any case, that they were mere superstitions and were no longer necessary to his people. The songs, he added, were learned as apprenticeship to witchcraft, but all that was a thing of the past.

Since this rejecting attitude is the basic belief of most Matacos—or at least what they profess to believe—the situation is delicate for the promoters. Patricio Doyle, a former Catholic priest who has focused on the cultural future of the Matacos, does not want to interfere with their religious beliefs or their forms of worship. But he does want to discover what remains of their values, skills, and legends, what the Matacos can build on as they become part of the Western world and the Argentine nation.

He is now working on a *revistita*, a small magazine in Matakos and Spanish that will belong to the community itself and serve as a vehicle for amplifying the multiple voice of the Matacos. He hopes the Matacos will begin to express their present problems as well as what belongs to their past and their collective memory.

He has also managed to persuade two experts in the development of art and recreation among marginal groups to come from Buenos Aires and work with the local people.

And yet Patricio Doyle, who has spent many years among the Matacos, does not speak their language. Nor, for that matter, does any other promoter, not even Diego Soneira. Nor do any of the white children. Some words are understood, some conversations can be followed vaguely, but not one of the people who have come to help the Matacos survive as a cultural entity is fluent in their language. No matter how they have tried, they have been unable to learn it or even find Matacos who will teach them.

I heard the language often during my stay. Once, I remember, I was at a meeting that Mario Pisano, a promoter, held with the residents of nearby Vizacheral to discuss future fishing activity. After some words had been

exchanged in Spanish, one of the men suddenly switched to Mataco, and the rest soon joined in with a flowing antiphony. Before one person had ended, another had begun, as if speaking to himself and yet to all of them, as if somebody inside were listening, murmuring very low—only ears accustomed to the bush could distinguish each sound—and on it went, a honied, intertwining superimposition of voices, until they stopped. They had reached some sort of conclusion, one and all of them, and Spanish was once again the language to be used. I felt, during these moments, as if they were defending their last refuge on earth, those thickets of syllables that only they could understand.

It almost seems as if the Matacos are unwilling to teach the *promotores* their language. Once you give strangers your language, it is as if you have given them your jungle, your land, your trees. It is in the language, after all, that places and birds, animals and customs are named and invoked.

Perhaps I had caught a glimpse of the real Impenetrable—the language, the one place in the world that belongs only to the Matacos.



The Matacos have beautiful legends.

Like those of all peoples, they narrate the origins of the universe, the reason why there are men and women, how the animals appeared, why it rains and why honey exists, the struggles of heroes and the voyages of tricksters.

Some of their legends seem to be recent because they exhibit a considerable awareness of white, dominant people.

In one of these, the Matacos explain why they are so few and other tribes so populous. According to this tale, the different races and nations crawled out from underground through a hole dug by an armadillo. All the men and women of each race were able to escape and populate the earth. But when the Matacos' turn came, only a few appeared before a pregnant Mataco woman got stuck in the hole and was unable to move. And so, many Matacos remain unborn.

Another legend says Christians and Matacos resided together long ago in one house "where everything could be found." Everything that was good—the axes, tools, horses, cattle, beautiful clothes for women—was taken by the ancestors of the Christians, and the Matacos were left with only clay pots, dogs, and "other inferior things."

The clay pot, which the Matacos make with great skill and elegance, is the protagonist of another short tale. It began to compete with the iron pot, saying that it could cook as well and as quickly over fire. But the iron pot won, and so the pot made of earth cracked, and was thrown away.

The Matacos have beautiful legends, but they feel defeated. A people will survive only if they are able to take pride in their own culture.



Between 1821 and 1982, almost 6.4 million immigrants came to Argentina. In 1895, immigrants made up 25.5 percent of the population, and by 1914, this figure had risen to 30 percent, the highest proportion in the world.

No statistics record how many Matacos there once were. So we cannot know what proportion is now left.



Some 420 miles south of El Sauzalito is the city of Resistencia, the capital of the province of Chaco.

In the central plaza of Resistencia—christened with that name because it triumphantly *resisted* the assaults of the savages—there is a statue. It is the copy of a statue I have seen often in art and history books and whose original I once contemplated in Rome itself. It was given to the city of Resistencia by the resident Italian-Argentine community, and it portrays the twins Romulus and Remus suckling a she-wolf.

That is how Rome saw its origins, as if there had been no previous tribes on its peninsula, no previous inhabitants. And the immigrants who came to the Argentine northeast saw themselves opening supposedly virgin territory just like the Romans did: each of them a Romulus, each a Remus coming to establish tiny empires in a foreign land.

There is no statue in Resistencia to the ancestors of Andrés Segundo or Ernesto Reynoso.

There is no statue of their ancestors anywhere.



By a strange coincidence I heard Rome mentioned the first morning I arrived in El Sauzalito. Although the reference had nothing to do with immigration, it may have had something to do with empires.

I asked Patricio Doyle why he had left Buenos Aires, what he was doing in this remote place.

"Christ was not born in Rome," Doyle answered. "He was born in Bethlehem. Who knows what will be born in this faraway land and radiate, by example, elsewhere?"



Most of the Matacos I spoke with seemed unaware of their purported transcendence or of the cultural crossroads they have come to.

I hesitated before writing down the previous sentence. I really cannot be certain that it is true.

The problem is that I was barely able to communicate with the Matacos during my brief stay. We talked, of course, extensively. Yet there was, except for one occasion, no deep contact—no moment when two people come together and know they are sharing something, that there is some understanding. I lacked their language, and they used mine without eloquence, though often with great dignity. Their Spanish, moreover, besides not being their native tongue, is the language of those who dominate them, and they must have supposed that what I would write about them might be essential for future aid or grants. They were careful, therefore, of what they said. Nor did it help that I lacked an interpreter: Translations at least pretend that there is some equality in the interchange. And there was the incredible reserve and intractability of the women, with whom I was never able to speak at all and whose importance in the conservation and transmission of an oral, autochthonous culture cannot be overstated.

I was not frustrated by this lack of connection. I interpreted it as a sign that the Matacos had secret paths in their forests to which I had no access, treasures they would not yield easily. I was glad they had something hidden—and only hoped that behind their silence, or the words

Ramón Navarrete, deputy mayor of the municipio, poses with his family in El Sauzalito. As the first Mataco ever to attain such a high position, he has ventured farthest into "the white jungle, the jungle of civilization where people play according to different rules."



Miguel Sayago

that are like silence, there are strengths upon which they can build as their experiment continues. As they become more self-assured, they should be able to engage in an ever more significant dialogue with the outside world.

But there was, as I suggested, one exception. His name is Ramón Navarrete. As the *primer consejal*, or deputy mayor, of the *municipio*, he had attained the highest political and administrative post a Mataco ever held. I had tried to speak to him on several occasions, and he was always busy. Only on my last day in El Sauzalito—as the afternoon turned into what I can only describe as a green-hot evening—were we able to talk.

When democracy and elections returned to Argentina in 1983, Diego Soneira decided to step down as intendente. The concentration of so much power in his hands had allowed the community to take gigantic steps forward, but it had also created confusion and seemed a bit artificial. It was time, Soneira believed, for the people themselves to administer their own institutions, to be less sheltered from the outside world. They had to learn not to look to him for all the answers. Though the Matacos constituted a large majority of the population, they did not propose one of their own as mayor, preferring a criollo who was sympathetic to them and had administrative experience. They did, however, elect three *consejales*, or aldermen, and Navarrete is one of them. He is not a leader, as is Ernesto Reynoso, but he is—of all the Matacos—the one who best understands how language and Argentine

society work. He is the closest example to an “intellectual” that I found in the Mataco community.

Like intellectuals everywhere, Navarrete is anguished. He must cope with burdens he only vaguely comprehends—budgets, sick leaves, papers in triplicate, the wonders of modern-day bureaucracy—and at the same time respond to the increasing demands of Matacos who believe the *municipio* exists to provide jobs and food.

To live between two worlds, where tradition and newness constantly mingle and conflict, is after all one of the primary experiences of modernity in the Third World. It is as if, he said, he had given me a quick lesson in Mataco and then sent me into the bush to fend for myself. Would I easily survive?

Navarrete has become an explorer, the Mataco who has ventured farthest into what Mami calls “the white jungle,” the jungle of civilization where people play according to different rules, where newcomers can easily get lost among other swamps and traps that await and tempt them.



Navarrete learned Spanish from an Anglican missionary when he was seven years old; but it was only when he reached his first year of high school and studied grammar—many years later as an adult—that he realized Mataco, just like Spanish, must have certain rules and categories. Since then he has been studying his own language, trying
(continued on page 13)

Grassroots Development and the Indians of the Argentine Chaco

In May 1987, the Chamber of Deputies of Chaco Province passed the *Ley Del Aborigen Chaqueño*, or Law of the Chaco Indians, a legislative milestone for the 20,000 Toba, Mocoví, and Mataco peoples of northeastern Argentina. As the legislators completed their work, hundreds of Toba, Mataco, and Mocoví Indians cheered in the streets outside. The new law not only set a precedent for Chaco Province, it represents part of a new historical phase in the treatment of Indians in Argentina which, as in most of the nations of the Americas, was marked by combinations of neglect, brutality, and exploitation.

Among other things, the new law grants indigenous peoples free access to land, the right to bilingual and bicultural education, and access to preventive and curative health services. It calls for improved housing, and establishes civil registries for Indians, who frequently have lacked documentation. The law also creates a new Institute of the Chaco Indian to replace the Dirección del Aborigen, or Indian affairs ministry, which has been largely confined to providing credit and equipment for cotton cultivation. The new institute will offer a wider range of services and, most crucially, will be governed by a board comprised of two Tobas, two Matacos, and two Mocovís, with a president nominated by the indigenous communities and appointed by the governor of Chaco Province. For the first time, Chaco Indians will be able to take on official responsibility for their own administration.

Since 1981, the Inter-American Foundation—in close collaboration with private organizations like the Asociación Promotores Chaco (APC) described by Ariel Dorfman, and government agencies like the Dirección del Aborigen—has helped pave the way for that transition by providing funding so that Indian communities in the Chaco could undertake projects to improve their economic base and better administer their own affairs.

As Dorfman mentions, the APC's efforts to help the Matacos make the transition from a precarious combination of migrant wage labor and hunting and gathering to a more secure livelihood have begun to pay off. A variety of approaches has been tried to permit the Matacos to stay at home and work while, at the same time, redefining for themselves what "home" and "work" mean. The town of El Sauzalito, which recently elected its first Mataco mayor and the first indigenous mayor in all of Argentina, is now a thriving community of 2,500 people. There are 44 irrigated fields, 22 of them stretching out on either side of the town along the Teuco River. Each plot supports two families on a total of 140 cleared hectares. People to whom agriculture was almost totally foreign 15 years ago now avidly grow cotton and vegetables, and raise chickens.

But the APC's work is not confined to El Sauzalito and the Matacos. In the tiny Indian towns of El Tartagal, El Sauzal, and Wichi-El Pintado, a start has been

made on irrigated agriculture, using El Sauzalito as a model. In El Sauzalito and other communities, Indians now run sawmills and carpentry shops, bake bricks in kilns, and plant citrus trees, with organizational and technical assistance from the APC.

The APC recently proposed to the IAF a new project that would not only consolidate and build on previous work by promoting irrigated agriculture and sawmills in additional Indian communities, but



Miguel Savago

In 1987, a new law was passed in Chaco Province granting indigenous people access to preventive and curative health services, such as this hospital in El Sauzalito.

also support work with Mataco women, and with non-Indian groups of criollo laborers and small-scale cattle-herders. The cattlemen, whose ancestors were driven out of neighboring Salta Province by the expansion of sugar cane cultivation at the turn of the century, face the same problem of a declining resource base as the Matacos. A tradition of exploitative relations between criollos and Matacos is gradually being overcome as the criollos see what the Matacos have gained through being organized. For example, one community association in El Impenetrable has a Mataco president although most members are criollo, while another community association, mostly composed of Matacos, has a criollo president who is married to a Mataco. The new proj-

ect will allow the APC to work with criollos to modernize cattle-breeding techniques and introduce irrigated farming. The APC will also undertake a new initiative with Mataco women (former attempts to develop artisanry failed) to grow and dry vegetables for sale to food processing plants.

In more ecologically hospitable regions of central and southern Chaco, the IAF has worked closely with the provincial-level Dirección del Aborigen and its president, since 1984, Carlos Benedetto, who was recently named president of the new Indian affairs institute created by the Chamber of Deputies. From 1983–86, the IAF financed land-clearing activities and the purchase of tractors to expand agricultural output in four Toba communities—La Matanza, Pozo del Toro, Raíz Chaqueña, and El Colchón—and in one Mocoví community, Las Tolderías. Although several of these communities have been settled for decades, a lack of capital and skills have kept farm plots unproductively small and made migrant labor an economic imperative.

Chaco Province has a tradition of highly mechanized cotton cultivation and the Dirección itself had previous experience in buying and introducing farm machinery, but an outside study was ambivalent about the proposal for tractors, and they were only reluctantly included in the IAF grant agreement. Despite problems in forming maintenance funds for the tractors and a slender grasp of the principles of rotating credit funds (in part due to a tradition of government subsidies), the Indian community associations were energized by the new grant. What made the IAF effort different from previous ones was the insistence on broad community participation in decision-making on tractor management, offering many people their first opportunity to help administer any appreciable asset. In the spring of 1988, the IAF refinanced four of the five communities, with a greater emphasis on training in vocational, managerial, and accounting skills. The grants also provided for clearing additional arable land, for fencing to secure land claims and keep out foraging animals, for repair shops to service tractors, and in the community of Raíz Chaqueña, for experimentation with goat-breeding and dry varieties of corn to reduce dependence on cotton. The refinancing underscores the IAF's recognition that underdevelopment is not overcome through one three-year grant, and that both private and public institutions are indispensable partners in the development process.

—David Bray

(David Bray is the IAF representative for Paraguay and northern Argentina. His report on grassroots organizations in eastern Paraguay follows this article.)

(continued from page 11)

to discover its inner laws.

This is not a detached intellectual pursuit. Navarrete has seen tribes in Salta who no longer speak their original tongue. He feels that each time an old man dies, a universe of words and stories dies with him. So Navarrete plans to teach the language to the Mataco children, as part of their curriculum. He is also interested in helping the promotores learn the language. He patiently explained several words I wanted to learn, but in spite of his excellent Spanish, our attempts often broke down at a loss for the proper usage.

He has not, however, been able to teach Mataco at school, although the law specifically recommends bilingual education. A previous school director let him work, but the next administrator opposed his presence there, saying he was unqualified. (Who, though, is qualified to certify teachers of Mataco?)

Navarrete's problem is symptomatic. If the Matacos are to become self-sufficient, the school must prepare the children for the future while the parents are learning in the fields and the offices—and this must be done in a way that shows respect for their culture. Instead, the Mataco children feel unwelcome in school. The dropout rate is outrageously high.

One of Navarrete's older daughters, now 18, had to repeat first grade three times and finally decided to stop wasting her time. It is true that in those times, she and the rest of the family had to periodically migrate to pick cotton. Now things seem better. Several Matacos have graduated from high school—and now work in the Asociación Comunitaria. They are essential to Patricio Doyle's plan to publish the revista. Navarrete's nine-year-old daughter has already completed three years of elementary school without repeating a grade and will herself enter high school in just a few years.

What would he like her to be?

"A lawyer," he says. "What we most need are lawyers who can defend our interests."

Navarrete is anguished and open and doubtful. He is trying to build bridges over rivers that keep changing course.

He is the only Mataco who did not ask me for anything.



I spent several days in El Sauzalito without meeting Diego Soneira. It turned out he was in the faraway village of El Espinillo, some 200 miles across El Impenetrable. I went to see him on my last day in the region.

I found him trying to put a lumbermill into operation. It had been erected a couple of years before, but the contractor had done everything wrong, and the mill had never worked. In a casual conversation with regional authorities, Soneira had mentioned what a pity such economic potential was being wasted, when the machinery could be repaired. He had been invited to try. What white technicians had failed to accomplish, or even propose, Soneira was going to do with Matacos. They had, after all, been operating a successful lumbermill for years.

If I needed a symbol of how far the Matacos have come, this was it. Instead of receiving help, Mataco operators, carpenters, and electricians were giving it to others, spreading their knowledge across El Impenetrable. And

the others, in this case, were Toba Indians, rivals of the Matacos for centuries. In fact, some Matacos in El Sauzalito—who one promotor playfully calls *los rezongones*, or complainers—had told me before I left that Diego should be home with them, that he did not care for them anymore.

Meanwhile, Diego would have liked nothing better than to be back in El Sauzalito. He had brought his wife and his seven children with him because the job was supposed to be over in a few days. Then several machine parts that he needed to complete the job were delayed, and the authorities also failed to give him some unspecified aid they had promised. A few days had turned into a week. The nine Soneiras, plus the five Mataco technicians, were sleeping in an abandoned brick house, cooking over an open fire in the patio. They were without running water and were assaulted each evening—at exactly five past eight—by the most venomous, stubborn, hostile mosquitoes they had ever encountered. (And these people know an awful lot about mosquitoes.) The mosquitoes were so terrible, in fact, that they forced the Soneiras to seek refuge each evening in the sweltering heat of their sleeping quarters—and managed to infiltrate the premises anyway, if one were to believe the blood-stained walls.

And yet, the Soneiras were all cheerful, and Diego was calm, confident, tireless. Perhaps it was better to have



Top: Workers at a Mataco-managed lumbermill. When a group of Toba Indians 200 miles away needed help repairing their own mill, five Mataco technicians, accompanied by the Diego Soneira family, right, went to assist them—spreading their knowledge across *El Impenetrable*.

Photos by Miguel Sayago

seen him here, as if he were on another adventure, starting from scratch in a relatively strange place. It may be that in this way I was able to catch a glimpse of what the man must have been like when he arrived in El Sauzalito so many years ago. There was no doubting his strength or his magnetism.

He watched me watch him and finally smiled and said: "I know what you are going to ask me. Everybody always asks me the same thing. You want to know why I came here, why I stay here?"

It was as if he had read my mind. So I asked him something different when we finally sat down. I asked him two questions. How long did he think this experiment would last? When would he know if he had been successful?

He said he did not know the answer to the first question, but he may have responded to it in answering the second.

"I'll be successful when I'm not needed anymore," Diego said.

And then he went off, 150 miles of dirt road away, to search for the missing spare parts.



One day in El Sauzalito, under the burning noon sun, I ventured a little into the monte.

I did not go alone. My idea was to be guided by a Mataco. I wanted to experience what it would be like to be submerged in a habitat where he was the master, where his sense of smell, his ears that notice the slightest twitch of a leaf, his extraordinary eyesight and foresight would make him my superior. I wanted to be in a place where all my knowledge and skill would be useless, where his culture reigned and mine was out of place. I wanted, in a way, to experience what the Matacos must feel every day as they confront white, Western civilization: to be at a loss, displaced, defenseless.

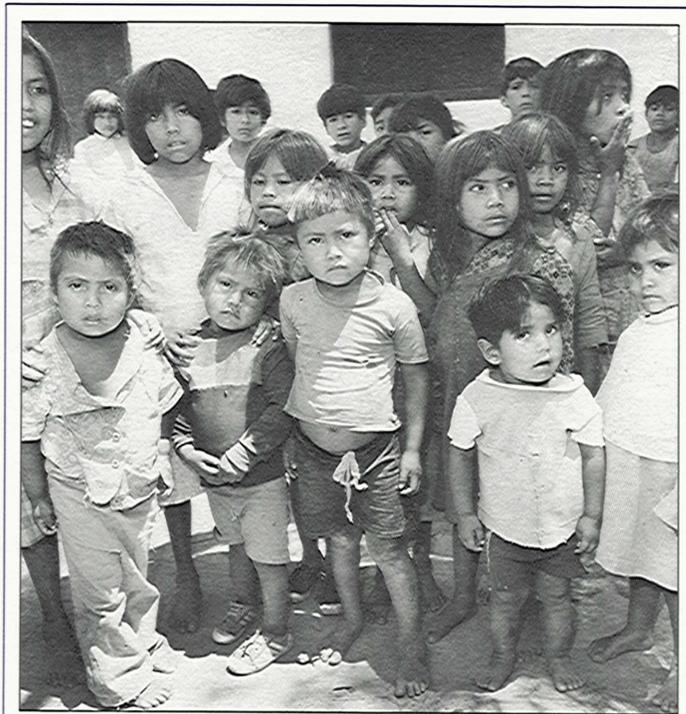
I was not in El Sauzalito long enough to take such a trip, nor had I built up enough confidence with a Mataco so he might take me along on one of the frequent hunting expeditions.

I settled for an artificial second best. Mami called two young Matacos—8 and 11 years old, respectively—to guide me toward a still-wild area near the Río Bermejo, where the town ends.

I was not sure if they understood just what it was that I wanted, but they moved with me toward the river, and for a while I convinced myself that I was on the verge of the desired experience. They glided barefoot through a labyrinth of undergrowth, moving through the thickets, scaring flocks of pale-blue butterflies, somehow able to find their way in that tangled vegetation.

If it were not for these boys, I thought to myself, I would be lost. It was a game I was playing with myself, of course. I knew that the town was nearby and that I was in no real danger of losing my way. As if to answer me, there was suddenly a noise in the bushes and I sensed something big lurching toward us. But no wild beast emerged. It was merely a pig, one of the few remaining from a failed livestock experiment. It snorted across our path. I wondered what the two Mataco kids thought of this expedition. But they would not answer any of my questions—just a nod of their heads once in a while, a pause to look back to see if I was following.

After we reached the river, they decided to come back



Miguel Savago

Young Mataco children in El Sauzalito look warily into the camera. Rather than losing population, the community is growing. Couples are marrying, children are being born, and young men who had migrated in search of jobs are returning home to stay.

by another route, and they got lost. Several times we reached a wedge of canes and weeds and vines that would not let us pass. We had to backtrack. And then, again, a few more yards and the need to start over. Finally, they made their way to the river, retraced their steps to a familiar path, and managed to get me safely home.

What is the meaning of this experience?

Should I emphasize the boys' surefooted, fleeting movements at the beginning of the excursion, proving how Mataco children are still acquainted with the jungle and will somehow continue in the traditions of their forefathers? Or is the second stage more significant, when they lost their sense of direction and the bushes seemed alien to them as they would not have been to their ancestors when they were children?

Or was there no significance whatsoever in that brief exploration? Was not their conduct distorted by my very presence, their need to please me, their need to interpret my rather sophisticated and enigmatic desires?

I cannot tell. I would have to be a Mataco.

I would have to be a Mataco to know exactly where the two boys are going.

ARIEL DORFMAN is a novelist, journalist, and poet whose books have been translated into a dozen languages. His recent work includes a novel, The Last Song of Manuel Sendero, and a book of poems, Last Waltz in Santiago. His latest novel, Máscara, will be published in English in October 1988 as Mascara. His work appears regularly in the New York Times, the Village Voice, the Los Angeles Times, The Nation, Le Monde, and El País.

INTERNALIZING THE CRISIS OF COTTON

Organizing Small Farmers in Eastern Paraguay

David Bray and Dionisio Borda

For centuries, the area along the Paraguayan-Brazilian border was virtually an unbroken wilderness resplendent with tall, flowering *lapacho* trees and exotic birds and mammals. Then in the mid-1960s, a paved road cut through the dense semi-tropical forest and spanned broad rivers to connect Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, with Asunción, sparking a land rush in the departments of Alto Paraná and Canendiyú in eastern Paraguay. From a thin sprinkling of lumberers, yerba maté tea leaf gatherers, and small groups of Mbya, Guayaki, and Chiripá Indians, the population multiplied nearly eightfold during the next two decades as Brazilians and Paraguayans stamped in, drawn by an abundant supply of cheap land and the prospect of finding jobs in one of the world's most massive public works projects—the Itaipú Dam.

By the mid-1980s, the boom was over. Vast stands of forest had been turned into farmland studded with blackened stumps, and the last undeveloped region in a country plagued by depleted topsoils was in danger of being exhausted. With the mechanization of large agroindustrial farms and the winding down of construction as Itaipú neared completion, the demand for day labor declined precipitously. Poor Paraguayans and Brazilians alike faced the difficult prospect of staying to eke out a living from farming small plots of land, or moving on. Many Brazilians returned home. The Paraguayans who did not migrate to Argentina to work on yerba maté plantations turned instinctively to cotton, recreating and extending the system of monocropping that had originally forced so many of them to leave their farms in central Paraguay and strike out for the forests of Alto Paraná in search of a better life.

Recently, however, some of those farmers have begun to search for alternatives. In 1981, a few of them began working with the Programa de Ayuda Cristiana (PAC) to lay the foundation for the first autonomous organization of campesinos in eastern Paraguay, the Asociación de Agricultores de Alto Paraná (ASAGRAPA). Simultaneous efforts were underway in other parts of Paraguay to help small farmers increase food production so that they could break their debt bondage to middlemen and organize to

increase family incomes by selling their cotton in bulk. This article details how PAC and ASAGRAPA came to believe that cotton itself was an addiction that could only be cured by inventing new markets that would turn subsistence production into cash crops.

A CONFLUENCE OF TWO STREAMS: THE BIRTH OF PAC

The social forces that brought small farmers to the Alto Paraná had their origins in central Paraguay to the west and in the Brazilian states of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul to the east. Paraguay's population had been decimated by the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70), and it took nearly a century before the supply of land around the edges of the large cattle *estancias* in Central, Cordillera, and Paraguari Departments began to run out. The threshold was crossed in the late-1960s when population increases combined with declining soil fertility from tobacco and cotton cultivation to force large numbers of small farmers to join "The March to the East," a national colonization effort to settle the forests of eastern Paraguay.

Meanwhile, across the border in Brazil, high world market prices had enthroned "King Soybean." Capital-intensive agribusinesses were expanding rapidly, squeezing out smaller farmers who kept moving westward to form the cutting edge of Brazil's famous "moving frontier."

The two streams of migrants that met, mingled, and not infrequently clashed in Alto Paraná brought very different agricultural endowments and traditions. Paraguayans lacked capital, had large extended families, and planted cotton as a cash crop. The Brazilians fell into two waves. The first was composed of farmers who were attracted by extensive ad campaigns mounted by land developers and who were able to sell their farms in Brazil for enough money to buy larger farms in Paraguay, with enough left over to buy a tractor and a harvester. The second wave, much poorer, was composed of agricultural workers and sharecroppers. The formation by Brazilians of capital intensive, North American-style family farms was soon followed by the



Leonardo Mino

A campesino stands among blackened stumps on farmland cleared from the dense forest of eastern Paraguay. The rich and plentiful land of Canendiyú and Alto Paraná departments, coupled with the prospect of finding jobs on the nearby Itaipú Dam project, attracted thousands of Paraguayan and Brazilian colonists during the mid-1960s. Two decades later the boom was over, leaving small farmers with little to depend upon except growing cotton. As an alternative, the Asociación de Agricultores de Alto Paraná (ASAGRAPA) has begun helping farmers organize new markets that would turn subsistence production into cash crops.

arrival of transnational soybean agribusinesses, resulting in a highly skewed rural class structure.

Overlaying that structure was a mosaic of languages and cultures that intensified the economic tensions. Most Paraguayans spoke Guaraní, an Amerindian language, and had only perfunctory command of Spanish. Most Brazilians spoke Portuguese, and many of them were of German descent and still spoke German in the home. While a combination of Portuguese and Spanish—Portuñol—began to emerge among the Brazilians (as a means of conducting business in Paraguay), many poor Paraguayans were no more adept at this hybrid language than at Spanish.

The population of the department was divided almost equally between Paraguayans and Brazilians by the end of the 1970s, and it became evident that any effort to assist the poor would have to span that division. In 1979, the Catholic Diocese of Alto Paraná joined with the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Río de la Plata to commission a survey for assessing needs and recommending solutions. Two years later, both churches joined forces to establish the Programa de Ayuda Cristiana (PAC) to promote a binational organization of small farmers and landless peasants that would help register deeds, open access to credit and markets, and encourage respect for diverse cultural tra-

ditions. Funding was forthcoming from a variety of sources, including Stichting Interkerkelijke Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingsprojecten (ICCO) of Holland, Brot Für Die Welt and MISEREOR of Germany, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Inter-American Foundation.

The basis for PAC's plan of action was a method that had been pioneered by the Centro Paraguayo de Cooperativistas (CPC) in other areas of the country (see articles by Richard Reed and Kenneth Jameson in *Grassroots Development*, Vol. 9, No. 2). To counteract the "dissolution of peasant society" that followed the expansion of export-oriented agribusinesses in the 1970s, CPC believed it was necessary to organize campesinos in small groups to revitalize subsistence production and then link those groups into a regional framework to market cash crops. Small farmers were encouraged to form local *comités*, or committees, that would function as solidarity groups for repaying mutually secured loans. *Comités* would receive intensive training in crop diversification to improve family diets. Consumer stores would stock agricultural supplies and basic commodities to hold down costs and reduce dependence on local middlemen. Communal gardens would be planted to capitalize the *comités* and provide income for village projects. As *comités* became solidified

and provided a secure foundation for household self-sufficiency, they would be knit together into a regional organization to improve services and to raise incomes through bulk marketing of cash crops, principally cotton.

Implementing any part of the CPC model was no easy task in an ethnically divided region where settlement patterns remained fluid because of the constant opening of new lands. Whether they were participating in a colonization effort sponsored by the government's Instituto de Bienestar Rural, had purchased property from a developer, or were part of a spontaneous invasion of unutilized land, Alto Paraná's Brazilian and Paraguayan small farmers often had one thing in common—difficulty defending their claims in land disputes. PAC's legal division offered counsel and assistance in registering deeds and protecting rights guaranteed under Paraguayan law. By helping 3,000 small farmers receive indemnity for land lost to rising waters behind the Itaipú Dam, PAC quickly earned a reputation for effectiveness and integrity, guaranteeing that its agronomists and organizational promoters would receive warm welcomes in campesino communities. That audience, however, would not prove to be entirely receptive to PAC's message.

BREAKING THE GRIP OF COTTON AND THE RISE OF ASAGRAPA

Paraguay's small farmers started to plant cotton extensively during the late 1960s, when it began to displace tobacco as the cash crop of choice. Annual production exploded between 1967 and 1986 from 26,700 to 343,200 metric tons. The crop was well suited to small-scale farming and offered, for a time, the promise of higher profits than tobacco. But in recent years, declining prices for cotton and increasing prices for agricultural inputs have trapped small farmers in a remorseless cycle. To pay for the increasingly expensive insecticides and fertilizers needed to grow cotton, farmers have mortgaged their crops in advance to middlemen, often on unfavorable terms. To get out of debt, campesinos have planted more cotton, reducing the acreage available for subsistence crops. The shortage of subsistence crops forced them to seek day labor to earn money to buy food. Day labor, in turn, reduced the time available for planting and tending both subsistence and cash crops. The cycle reached its most crucial point each year from October to December—enshrined in popular lore as *Karai Octubre*, or Lord October, the cruelest month—when money from the last cotton harvest had been spent and the first subsistence crops were yet to arrive.

For three years, PAC's team of 10 promoters and agronomists worked to persuade small farmers that the calamity of *Karai Octubre* was not a natural disaster, like a drought, but a manmade scarcity that could be prevented. They offered access to credit so that campesinos could concentrate on their fields without having to migrate in search of day labor. They preached the importance of planting winter crops in July and August, of raising small animals and starting domestic industries to diversify production and regularize the flows of food and cash throughout the year. Above all, they emphasized the importance of establishing a secure base of subsistence.

It was the small farmers themselves, however, who forced PAC to subsidize cotton. Many campesinos had

been growing cotton for 20 years and brought the practice with them to Alto Paraná. They had always grown much of their own food, but they also recognized that those crops did not provide the cash to buy basic necessities such as cooking oil, sugar, and clothing. PAC, meanwhile, had no ready markets to offer that would justify the risks marginal producers faced in switching to alternative crops. From 1981 to 1984, PAC gave credit almost exclusively for cotton, if they wanted to have anyone to work with at all. The emphasis had shifted, gradually but unmistakably, from organizing to make households more self-sufficient to organizing to market cotton.

In February 1984, representatives from 40 comités met at PAC's headquarters in Hernandarias and founded the Asociación de Agricultores de Alto Paraná to analyze how local production schedules could be coordinated to jointly market cotton directly to a buyer. ASAGRAPA soon learned that cotton was as destructive to a regional organization of small farmers as it was to individual household economies. In the first place, the need for imported agrochemicals made cotton extremely expensive to cultivate. When ASAGRAPA's elected leadership met the following November to consider loan applications and production plans from member comités, it discovered that cotton accounted for 90 percent of the requests for money but only 31 percent of the land to be planted. And when all the applications were totaled, PAC's rotating credit fund covered only one-eighth of the amount. This not only raised the potentially divisive issue of how to allocate scarce resources, it also forced ASAGRAPA to address more fully the issue of who owned those resources.

Friedhelm Westermann, a Lutheran pastor who is now PAC's general coordinator, recently reflected on that crucial period: "At first we were coping, trying to get the program off the ground. There was no educational spade-work done before giving credit, no consciousness-raising. Loans were made as if we were a cooperative or a bank, but people knew the money was coming from an outside institution. Soon there was talk, individuals telling each other, 'You can use all that money. It comes from for-



Leonardo Minto

ASAGRAPA leaders discuss ways to market non-traditional cash crops such as corn, maté tea, peanuts, and cheese during a monthly meeting at the group's headquarters in Hernandarias.



eigners and was intended for the people—and that's us! You don't have to pay it back.' And then the people began to stop repaying."

Although 347 families had been organized into 58 comités by 1985, many of the groups lacked solidarity. When a colony became crowded, campesinos frequently moved onward to newly opened land. Comités dissolved, and members left their unpaid debts behind.

ASAGRAPA hoped that joint marketing of cotton would raise incomes and that the new system would persuade farmers that credit was a renewable resource worth protecting. Negotiations with a large cotton gin produced an agreement for loans, insecticides, fertilizer, and equipment to get the system underway. However, when the gin failed to deliver what had been promised in a timely fashion, local comités began to question their regional leadership. At harvest time, a troubled ASAGRAPA was unable to deliver all of the cotton it had pledged, and sacks that had been lent to the farmers by the gin for packing the crop were not returned. Despite marketing 500 hectares, ASAGRAPA lost money. Poor recordkeeping made it difficult to assign responsibility, increasing tensions among the membership.

ASAGRAPA's leadership began meeting weekly to untangle the mess and restore relations with the gin. But when those meetings accomplished nothing, leaving members exhausted and frustrated, it became apparent that trying to produce and market cotton was threatening to unravel the organization before it had really coalesced. PAC, which was underwriting the expenses of the meet-



Photos by Leonardo Miño

ings, pointed out that the impasse was consuming both time and money. Something had to be done. One of the small farmer promoters now working for ASAGRAPA sees this stalemate as a watershed for the regional organization. "ASAGRAPA really found itself through the cotton experience. When the members planted all those hectares, marketed it together, took very heavy

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One of the small farmer promoters now working for ASAGRAPA sees this stalemate as a watershed for the regional organization. "ASAGRAPA really found itself through the cotton experience. When the members planted all those hectares, marketed it together, took very heavy



losses, and were left without food or money, the only thing left was to turn to self-provisioning and sell the surplus." That is, ASAGRAPA had to suffer the contradictions of growing and marketing cotton before it could return to the original priority of subsistence that PAC had tried to implement without success. What was new was the idea of turning subsistence crops into cash crops.

By the end of the 1985–86 agricultural cycle, ASAGRAPA had made the hard-nosed decision to quit financing cotton entirely in favor of traditional food crops. That decision, however, represented a consensus formed by ASAGRAPA's leaders and PAC's team of promoters. Consultations with local comités were irregular, and the new policy ran into difficulty when loan repayments remained discouragingly low.

In 1986–87, the credit policy was tightened further. Loans were provided only for community gardens, usually on a plot of land donated by a local member. Each participating group would jointly farm its garden, with profits from corn, peanuts, and other crops divided equally among active members or used to capitalize the comité itself. PAC's agronomists worked with the comités to turn the gardens into minilaboratories where small farmers could experiment with intercropping, learning lessons that could be applied to their own fields in order to preserve soil fertility while maximizing production.

In the most recent agricultural year, ASAGRAPA has cautiously liberalized its credit policies to finance a wider variety of activities. Comités are now starting small apiaries to produce honey, digging ponds to raise fish, and building hutches to raise rabbits. Loans are also being channeled into expanding a network of consumer stores to reduce costs for basic staples, and purchasing processing equipment and setting up outlets to improve the marketing of traditional food crops.

The new emphasis on encouraging members to grow

more corn, beans, yerba maté, and other food crops is gradually catching on. Isidoro Rivas, the 60-year-old father of 13 children, offers a vivid example of how things are beginning to change. He was born and raised in Paraguari in central Paraguay, moved to a new colony in Caaguazú in search of richer soils, then finished his personal "march to the East" in 1981 by coming to Alto Paraná. He not only brought several adult children and their families with him, but also the tradition of growing cotton.

Visiting his house on a Sunday last November, we found ourselves immersed in a swirl of children, grandchildren, and other relatives. When asked about his cotton field, don Rivas escorted us to the shed attached to his house. Pointing to the 18 bulky sacks of peanuts, corn, and rice stacked inside, he explained why he no longer planted cotton. "Before, this late in the year, the rice and corn were gone. All we had left after selling the cotton harvest was enough to buy a suit of clothes. We barely scraped by, but now there's plenty to eat."

Last year, Isidoro marketed his excess production through ASAGRAPA, selling 200 kilos of shelled and 500 kilos of unshelled peanuts, and 300 kilos of corn. Now he can take his rice to a mill that ASAGRAPA recently opened in Hernandarias, a suburb of Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, two hours away by bus, and have it processed for about one cent per kilo. Surveying the half-hectare he has planted with rice, he estimates it will yield some 1,000 kilos, enough to feed his extended family, with a surplus besides. He also notes that the profits won't be eaten up by the expensive fertilizers and insecticides cotton would have required.

Isidoro's son Tomás, 27, works as a promoter for ASAGRAPA. He notes that the members of comités in his zone are starting to significantly change their cropping patterns, citing estimates that show cotton cultivation has dropped from as much as 97 percent of tilled land to around 25 percent. As we walk back to his father's crowded house, he points out a neighbor who has recently planted all of his land in cotton. Shaking his head, Tomás says softly, "That man will have nothing left after his harvest is in."

MAKING ELBOW ROOM IN THE MARKETPLACE

For small farmers like Isidoro, Tomás, and their neighbors, marketing is the key to changing their fortunes. Traditionally they have been locked into monocropping because rural marketing networks for food crops have been nonexistent or underdeveloped. As a first step toward finding a way out of cotton, ASAGRAPA purchased machinery for a grain mill in Hernandarias and opened a market stand in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, Paraguay's second largest city, which is located just a few miles from the Itaipú Dam.

When the market stand opened in March 1986, the focus was on wholesaling large bags of rice, peanuts, and maté tea. ASAGRAPA's newly reorganized marketing department made several sales to retailers during the first six months, making little money but slowly learning how marketing worked. Sound business practices were mastered the hard way: by overcoming mistakes. After a shakeout period of sloppy accounting controls, lost money, and bitter recriminations, ASAGRAPA tightened up its book-

keeping and decided to shift gears into retailing, which offered higher profit margins.

Realizing that the competition was stiffer at this level and required more attractive presentation, ASAGRAPA contracted with a Brazilian firm to manufacture retail packaging for their products. Emblazoned in Guaraní on every plastic bag was ASAGRAPA's new advertising slogan—*Ore Kokue Pe Guaré Hi'Upyra*—which can be roughly translated as "From Our Fields, For Your Table." To guarantee an adequate supply of quality products, another \$3,500 was invested in additional equipment for the processing plant in Hernandarias, and \$8,000 was spent in expanding and sprucing up the market stand.

Thus far, profits have been modest—peaking at \$40 per day at the beginning and end of each month and falling to half that amount on average days. The driving force behind this cycle is the Itaipú Dam, which still employs a major chunk of the local workforce and pays salaries monthly. It took a while for ASAGRAPA's staff to appreciate this rhythm and adjust their purchases of perishable produce accordingly.

Those in charge of buying have also had to learn local tastes. During one month soon after the market opened, ASAGRAPA bought large quantities of *zapallo*, a kind of squash, because comités had planted them. The retail market for *zapallos*, however, was as soft as the rotting *zapallos* soon became waiting for people to buy them. The same lesson was learned with *locro*, a white corn widely consumed in the countryside that couldn't be given away in town. *Porotos*, or field peas, on the other hand, sold briskly—so the word has gone out to members to grow more peas and less white corn.

It is being plugged into this circuit of information that has provided the biggest revelation for ASAGRAPA's small farmers. Cotton, enmeshed in a dense network of intermediaries and national exchange controls, seemed to have no logic to its pricing other than the whims of its brokers. As Reinaldo Martínez, the current manager of the market stand, says, "Before, our members didn't know anything

about markets; they couldn't even imagine what it all involves."

But as farmers came to Ciudad Presidente Stroessner to drop off produce from their comités or stopped by the stand while in town on another errand, they began to watch the give and take as customers browsed, ignoring some items and trying to bargain a lower price on others. For the first time, small farmers were in direct communication with a market, learning its language and beginning to understand why ASAGRAPA could afford to pay one price for their grains and produce and not another. They could now adjust their production in a far more agile fashion than they would have ever dreamed possible.

Turning small farmers into market impresarios, however, requires hard-won skills as well as a shift in perspective. On a recent visit to the market stand, we watched a campesino clerk trying to total the daily balance, punching keys cautiously on his calculator while muttering to himself that "this tool is harder work than a hoe."

Indeed, PAC accountant Eduardo Vera says that months were spent training small farmers in basic bookkeeping. The task was difficult because the very idea of documenting all commercial exchanges is foreign to a rural culture in which a person's word is his bond and a receipt is taken as a sign of distrust. Even then, only a thin stratum of farmers have the basic literacy and math skills to keep documentary records. The long months have begun to pay off, though, as ASAGRAPA now handles all of the daily accounts, and PAC assists only with the monthly balance.

In recent months, business has been brisk. In addition to refining the retail operation, plans are underway to begin supplying corner stores and supermarkets in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. As the manager of the market stand proudly points out, they have won *derecho de piso*, or elbow room in the market. In recognition of what has been accomplished, the IAF recently approved the first grant directly given to ASAGRAPA by a foreign donor, reflecting its maturity as a small farmer organization. The



Left: An ASAGRAPA member works at the processing plant in Hernandarias. Above: Attractive packaging makes members' products more competitive in retail markets.

Photos by Leonardo Miño

grant will be used to buy a truck to haul products from field to mill to store, to install additional processing equipment, and to obtain technical assistance for improved marketing.

FRAGMENTATION AND UNIFICATION

Although ASAGRAPA was founded in early 1984, it did not become formally independent from PAC until October of 1986. Many grassroots support institutions in Latin America strive to create autonomous organizations of small farmers, but achieving that goal is a long process that often extends beyond formal declarations of independence. PAC promoter Miguel Lezcano has called this transitory period "the crisis of independence."

Some small farmer organizations define autonomy absolutely, believing that they need no outside assistance at all and invoking a "circle the wagons" mentality. In other instances, support organizations continue to be the power behind the throne, encouraging what might paradoxically be called "dependent autonomy." PAC and ASAGRAPA teetered tensely between these poles for nearly a year, before and after formal independence, trying to work out a system for transferring responsibility while providing the training and technical support in market analysis, administration, accounting, and other skills needed to survive in a modern economy.

Egos also played a role, but Lezcano says the friction arose from the different expectations of people in the two organizations, adding, "I don't see that as a conflict, but as something normally to be expected."

Aquilino Vega, the recently reelected president of ASAGRAPA, echoes that view, saying, "That was a hard period, but now it's okay. It depended a lot on us . . . we had to define what we were doing. The question is: What is autonomy? And what is independence? That's where the friction starts."

For the time being, at least, an accommodation has been worked out. PAC now defines itself as a promotional organization at the service of ASAGRAPA, which ultimately makes all the decisions. Organizationally, all of the service divisions are now composed of joint teams of ASAGRAPA and PAC promoters. In a dramatic effort to demonstrate PAC's commitment to ASAGRAPA's autonomy, Pastor Westermann has pledged that PAC will phase itself out of existence during the next three years, and staff has already been reduced as a first step in that direction.

As ASAGRAPA steadily moves out on its own course, the focus will begin to shift to internal problems that threaten to fragment the organization. The long search for a viable credit policy has taken its toll on membership rolls, which have dropped from a peak of 347 families to around 250. New comités are in formation among 300 families in recently settled areas, and it is hoped that the expanded marketing program will revitalize many of the existing comités, reversing membership declines. In the meantime, the corresponding problems of weakness and splintering at the base and centralization of power at the top remain unsolved.

Many comités are unviably small. The average comité has 10 families, and some are only half that size, making it very costly to provide technical and organizational support for groups that produce few surplus crops. Some of

the comités do receive assistance from other agencies, but that tends to reduce loyalty to and participation in ASAGRAPA.

Ironically, the tendency toward extremely small comités may be reinforced by credit policy. Most comités are composed of close friends and relatives, and those informal ties reinforce group solidarity and repayment of loans. These tightly knit networks sometimes work to exclude new members for fear of losing control of group resources. At the same time, comités are in danger of splintering when there is a personal falling out between old friends and neighbors or when a subgroup of families decides to move to a new settlement area. Usually, instead of reaching out for new members, this results in a comité of 12 families becoming two comités of six.

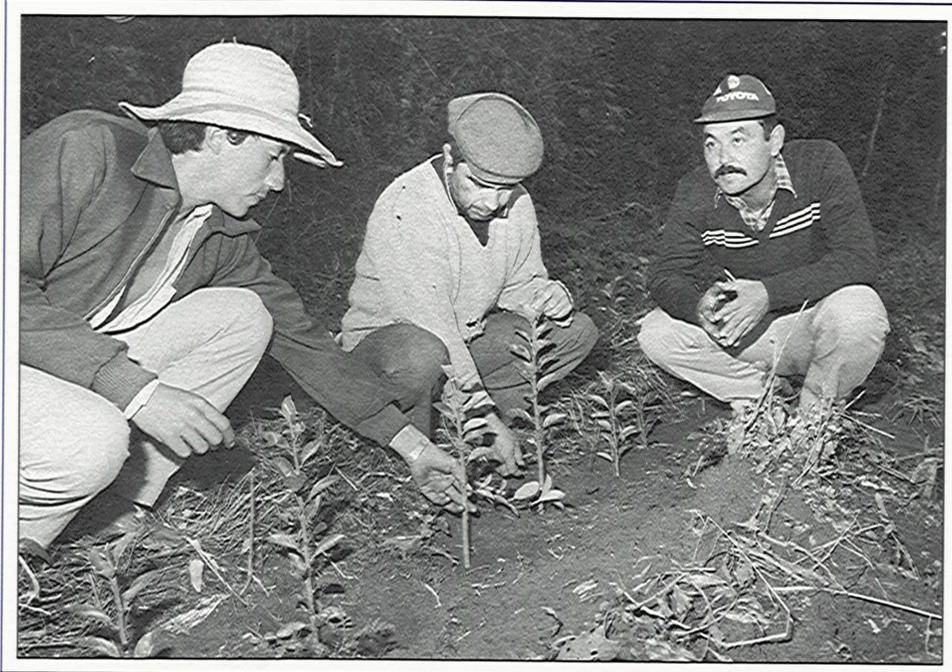
ASAGRAPA has not yet evolved an organizational mechanism to combat this fissionary process by strengthening bonds between local comités. The level of organization best able to form these kinds of working relationships—the zonal level—is also the most undeveloped. ASAGRAPA is organizationally top heavy, with an increasingly savvy and aggressive leadership, a thin stratum of zonal promoters, and an inconsistently involved membership base.

One consequence has been the emergence of what might be called "professional peasants." Many of ASAGRAPA's leaders devote considerable time, sometimes all of it, to the organization. As the need for full-time managers rises, ASAGRAPA must find a way to compensate them for the time spent away from their fields. The danger is that this managerial group will then become even further removed from the needs and concerns of members at the base.

Thus far, the pressure for compensation has been handled differently, depending on the task and responsibility. Tomás Rivas, for example, is a zonal promoter and agricultural extensionist. He spends as much as 20 days a month away from his fields, monitoring community gardens and giving training courses in beekeeping and fish-farming. He is paid the equivalent of a day's wage for agricultural labor, plus a modest per diem. On the days he must travel to Ciudad Presidente Stroessner for meetings, he receives bus fare, food, and lodging. One health promoter in the same zone has only had time to plant half a hectare, and his wage from ASAGRAPA does not make up for the lost production. The problem is common and promoters have recently petitioned for a raise.

This problem has been circumvented in the processing factory and at the market stand by rotating the workforce. Each staff person, except for the manager, spends only two out of every eight weeks on the job, giving them ample time to cultivate their own fields to supplement their wages.

The problem is more acute in ASAGRAPA's main office in Hernandarias, where full-time leaders are needed to cope with an increasingly complex array of problems. Some observers see the danger that this group of experienced managers will become too valuable to the organization to ever go back to being small farmers, making it difficult for leadership skills to spread through the organization. Yet an arbitrary or too frequent rotation of people in these positions threatens to increase organizational confusion and inefficiency and undermine the hard-won gains that have already been made. ASAGRAPA, like other cam-



Leonardo Mifio

Farmers inspect citrus plants in a nursery with a promoter from ASAGRAPA. The organization recently liberalized its credit policies to finance a wider variety of activities such as this nursery. Other farmers are starting apiaries to produce honey, digging ponds to raise fish, and building hutches to raise rabbits.

pesino organizations struggling to balance equity with technical competence, will have to periodically take stock of where it is going and adjust policies accordingly (for a look at how a Bolivian cacao federation is solving similar problems, see Kevin Healy, *Grassroots Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1).

Perhaps the most difficult long-term problem facing ASAGRAPA is trying to formulate policies and procedures that integrate its Brazilian and Paraguayan members. The gaps that must be spanned are both geographic and economic. One of ASAGRAPA's four zones, Katueté in Canendiyú Department, is primarily Brazilian with a sprinkling of Paraguayans, while the membership ratio in the other three zones is reversed. The Brazilian farmers of Katueté are, on average, better capitalized and more productive than their Paraguayan neighbors, though few are fully mechanized. Almost half of the total produce sold at the market stand in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, including all of the cheese and chickens and most of the rice, comes from Katueté.

Anxiety about the economic power of the Brazilians recently surfaced when the farmers of Katueté requested a loan from ASAGRAPA/PAC to buy a rice mill. The leaders of ASAGRAPA/PAC hesitated, afraid that increasing the economic power of the most affluent zone could provoke a rupture between Paraguayans and Brazilians. A frank dialogue about these concerns produced a compromise: Katueté reaffirmed its commitment to ASAGRAPA and agreed to send half of its rice to Hernandarias for processing and sale in the market stand.

This compromise, like many of the policies that have emerged as ASAGRAPA tries to build a new marketing network, is tenuous and may yet come unglued. To outsiders, it may seem that much of what has been accomplished is dwarfed by what remains to be done. What is so special about an organization that required significant infusions of support from foreign donors to get off the ground and will require additional external assistance for years to come, especially in service activities?

People close to ASAGRAPA realize that its achievements cannot be measured solely in short-range economic terms. If all of the money invested in ASAGRAPA were distributed among the poor farmers of Alto Paraná, it probably would not have paid for a month's supply of yerba maté. What ASAGRAPA has demonstrated—in a country with weakened communal traditions and no supportive public policies—is that small farmers can take charge of their own affairs, and learn from mistakes to claim their own successes. In partnership, ASAGRAPA and PAC have shown that small farmers can organize to free themselves from a monocrop economy and win elbow room in the marketplace. ◆

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NOTES

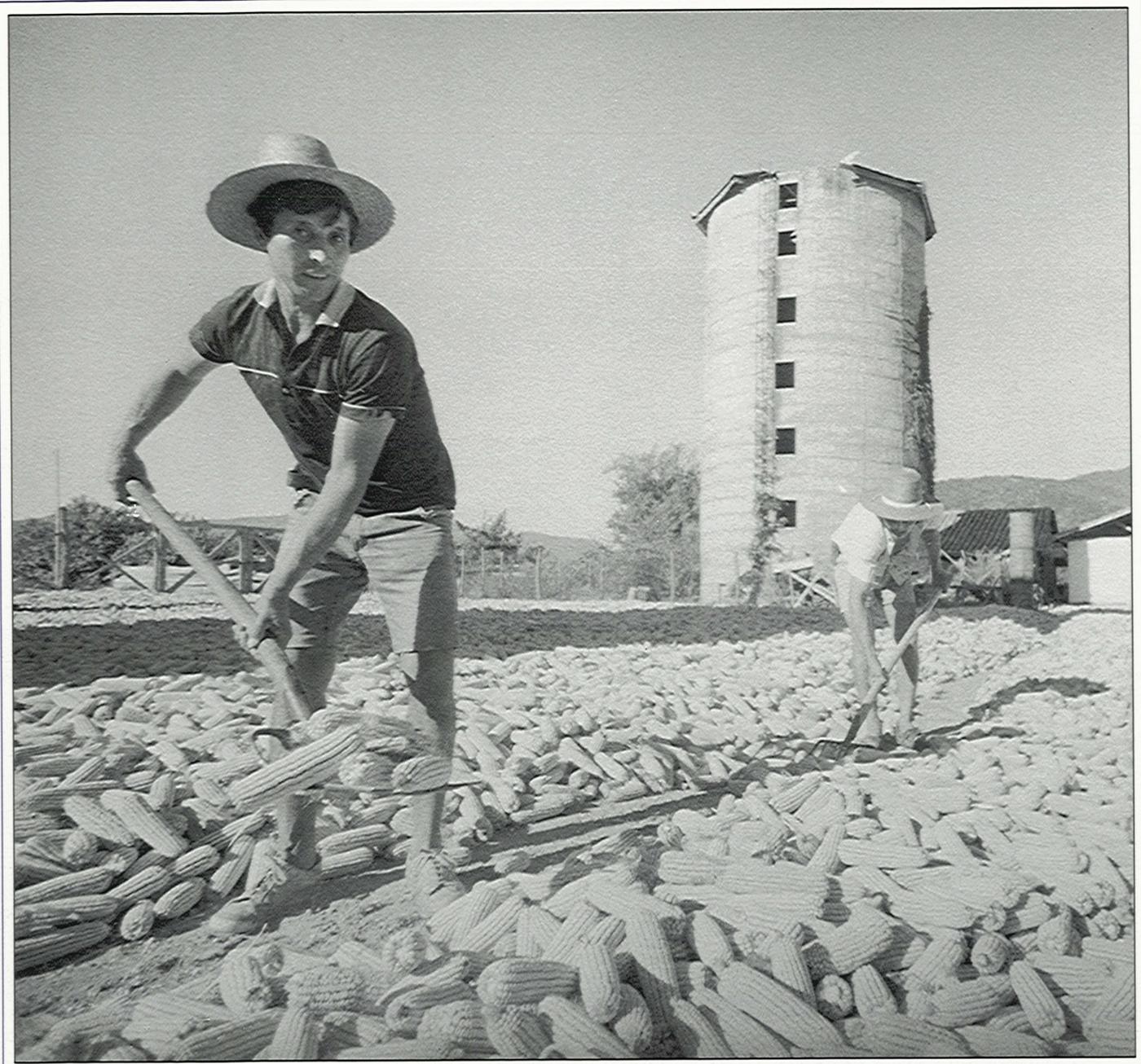
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THE VALLEY WITHOUT BIRDS

Patrick Breslin



Miguel Saizgo

Farmers in the Cachapoal Valley of central Chile spread out recently harvested corn to dry. Through the Cooperativa Campesina Intercomunal Peumo, Ltda. (COOPEUMO), they are participating in a bold campaign to change the way small farmers handle pesticides.

Grapes hang in purple, ponderous bunches from the arbors of every house in the Cachapoal Valley in central Chile. Plum trees sag with the weight of fruit. Foot-long corn cobs, bright yellow as a rain slicker, are spread to dry in the barnyards. At dawn, sunflowers in tall, top-heavy ranks nod towards the east.

But few birds wheel over these fields of plenty, and the empty skies worry the Cachapoal's small farmers. In three turbulent decades they have seen the economic and social structures of their valley and the very earth itself heave and quake. They have weathered all that, but they fear the disappearing birds may be harbingers of a true catastrophe—the gradual poisoning by pesticides of the area and its people.

Farmers in the Cachapoal, like many others throughout the Third World, are increasingly affected by an expanding and highly competitive international market in fresh produce. Competition pressures them to ever heavier use of fertilizers, as well as pesticides that are already threatening their land and their health. Far away, in countries such as the United States, the health of consumers may be threatened as well, by residues of dangerous pesticides on imported fruits and vegetables.

Concern about that threat grows apace with the produce trade. Technological advances in refrigeration, storage, and transport have eliminated the seasons. In the United States, for example, consumers no longer have to wait for local harvests to eat perishable grapes, peaches, plums, and nectarines. One quarter of the fruit consumed is imported, and between December and May, every fifth grape North Americans pop into their mouths grew on a Chilean vine.

Since the United States and some other fruit-importing countries also produce and export most of the pesticides, among them substances so toxic to humans and the environment that they are banned for domestic use, the venomous circle is complete.

Concern about this problem is usually left to environmentalists, scientists, well-informed and health-conscious consumers—all members of the world's elite. Their solutions, which include complicated models of integrated pest management, are not easily sold to poor farmers living on the economic edge.

In Chile, however, the Cooperativa Campesina Intercomunal Peumo, Ltda. (COOPEUMO), which links 460 small farmers with purchasing, credit, and technical assistance services, has designed a bold, three-year educational campaign to change the way its members and their neighbors handle pesticides and to substitute less toxic pesticides for the more dangerous ones now in use. The Inter-American Foundation recently approved \$77,378 to support that effort. Since the problem is now worldwide, with an estimated half-million cases of pesticide poisoning each year, the outcome could have implications far beyond the Cachapoal Valley.

COOPEUMO's campaign is a grassroots response, by the people most directly threatened by pesticides. If it succeeds, it will show that significant steps to confront the dangers of pesticides can be organized from the bottom

up. Whether it succeeds will depend on the cooperative's ability to balance its members' short-term economic interests against their long-term health concerns. What makes success imperative is the alarming speed with which the cumulative effect of pesticides have posed a threat. Farmers in the Cachapoal are caught in a dilemma. The choices they make, in some sense, may involve us all.

The setting for this drama is a beautiful transversal valley running west off the north-south axis of Chile's central valley, a couple of hours by bus south of Santiago. Every few miles along its dirt roads are artifacts of recent history—the pillars on which the gates to huge estates once swung. The roads were private drives, and the small farms that COOPEUMO members now work were parts of vast *fundos* owned by a few families, a pattern typical throughout rural Chile, where land ownership was as highly concentrated as anywhere in the Americas. In 1955, for example, 4.4 percent of the landowners had 81 percent of the farmland. Landless day laborers and the owners of tiny subsistence plots generally lived around the small towns. Other workers lived year-round on the *fundos*. Together, they constituted a pool of very cheap agricultural labor.

The arrangement was not only exploitative but inefficient as well. As much as 40 percent of prime farmland was left fallow. "It was all blackberry brambles when we arrived," said Juan Huanche, a cooperative member who settled in the valley in 1962. And the system didn't meet the country's needs. Agricultural output in the 1950s steadily fell behind demand, requiring more imports to close the gap and acting as a drag on the whole economy. But so long as the traditional *fundo* system existed, it insured social and political control to a small ruling class. As in much of Latin America, agrarian reform was debated, and resisted, for decades. In Chile, one of the first places to which it came was the Cachapoal.

For several years, the Catholic Church, itself a large landowner, had become more outspoken about the evils of the *fundo* system and more concerned about the growing appeal of Marxist critiques of that system. Following Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which insisted on the rights of rural workers to land, the Chilean bishops issued a pastoral letter in 1962 heralding experiments in land reform on four of the Church's estates, including a 1,500-hectare *fundo* called "Las Pataguas" in the Cachapoal Valley. Soon after, Las Pataguas was divided among 76 families, most of them its former workers, who were given 20 years at low interest to pay for the land.

With these experiments, the Church jump-started a long overdue process into motion throughout Chile. Three successive governments—of the right, center, and left—implemented ever more sweeping land redistribution policies. Since the Church action had been closely coordinated with members of the reformist and rapidly growing Christian Democratic party, the experiments in the Cachapoal and at the three other sites greatly influenced the agrarian reform project launched by the party after coming



Miguel Saizago

Felipe Castro, in protective gear, sprays tomato plants against pulgones, or plant lice. Many farmers try to avoid using the cumbersome, expensive gear, but through COOPEUMO's training program they are learning the importance of protecting themselves against highly toxic pesticides.

to power in 1964. Cooperatives were fostered, experiments in communal farming undertaken.

Over the next decade, agrarian reform became a major issue in Chile. In 1970, Salvador Allende, promising a "transition to socialism," won Chile's presidential election but not control of the Chilean congress. Allende stepped up the pace of land expropriations. At the same time, organized peasants in many parts of the country began to occupy fundos on their own. Fueled by competing ideologies and the intensifying struggle for political power, land reform careened through the countryside, gathering speed, crashing through ancient barriers, leaving turmoil—and new possibilities—in its wake.

When the Chilean military took power in a 1973 coup d'état, it jammed the whole process into reverse. Some campesino leaders were killed, some arrested; others were dismissed from their organizations, which went into decline. Many of those who had gained land under the different agrarian reform programs lost it through fraud, or ran into debt and had to sell out, often to the old owners. But the military government did not drive the process all the way back to a restoration of the fundo. Instead, its economic policies opened rural Chile to the



full impact of the market system. A flood tide of imported food bankrupted many farmers. But the same policies encouraged others, particularly the larger ones, to exploit Chile's low wages, rich soil, and its harvests during Northern Hemisphere winters—all comparative advantages in fruit production and export.

All these changes and upheavals in the Chilean countryside during recent years have had their impact on the Cachapoal. In less than three decades, it raced from semi-feudalism to capitalism, with pit stops in cooperativism and collectivism. As if that weren't enough, at 7 p.m. on March 3, 1985—a lucky hour because almost everyone was outside enjoying the summer Sunday evening—the earth quaked and adobe farmhouses all over the valley crumbled into dust. In some communities around San Vicente and Pichidegua, 90 percent of the old farmhouses collapsed.

The Peumo cooperative, too, has been shaped by the valley's changes and upheavals since its organization in 1969 to take advantage of the new services that came with agrarian reform. Its original members were a mixture of commercial farmers, subsistence farmers, and landless peasants, all swept together as the reform program churned up the countryside. Many of the cooperative's older members grew up as workers on the fundos. In their lifetimes, they have experienced one dramatic change after another.

Membership had reached 700 shortly before the military coup, but by the late 1970s, the cooperative was reduced to running a supply store for its few remaining active members, mainly larger farmers. In 1978, Private Agencies Cooperating Together (PACT), a U.S.-based consortium of private development organizations, joined with six Chilean development agencies to introduce a credit and technical assistance project for 140 smaller farmers in the valley, many of them then in danger of losing their land.

That project began a revitalization of a cooperative that, as one of its members, Domingo Aros, said, "had been decaying, decaying for several years." For him and many others, the key was the five-man team of agronomists, agricultural technicians, and community action promoters who administered the project. "They worked around the clock," said Aros.

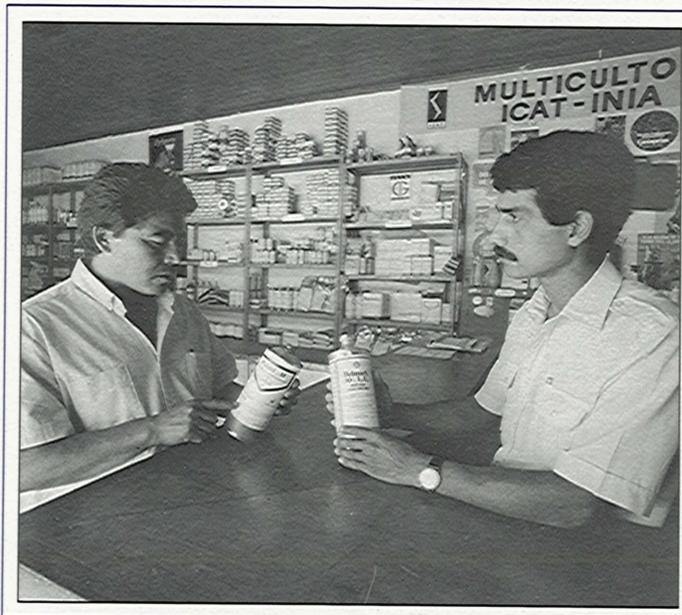
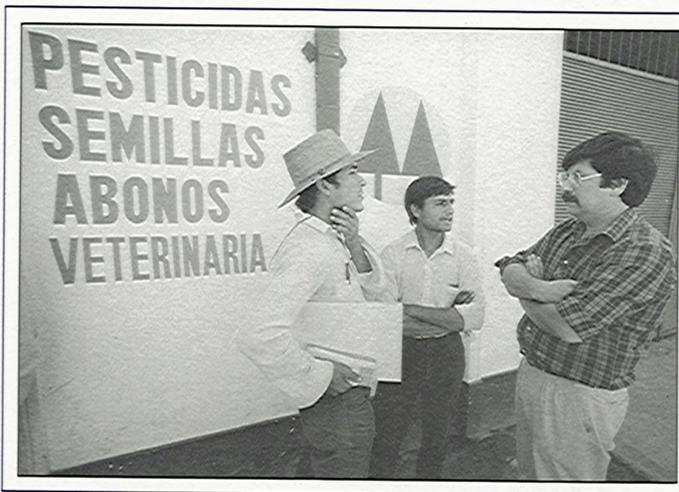
The technical team, on the other hand, gives much of the credit to the members' faithful repayment of their loans, at a rate consistently around 97 percent. "The small farmer always breathes easier when he's repaid a loan," said Carlos Venegas, who works as a promoter with the team. "They are always nervous about a debt until it's paid off."

Whatever the balance, there is clearly an unusually close and complicated relation between the team and the members. Venegas personifies that relationship. A member of the technical team, he has also served as the cooperative's president.

Venegas grew up in the Cachapoal, the son of a landless agricultural worker. At age 15, he found work in Santiago as a baker and joined the union. A few years later, with some knowledge of working-class organization, he returned to the Cachapoal. He has been a peasant leader there ever since. When PACT was recruiting its technical assistance team, Venegas was hired as a promoter.

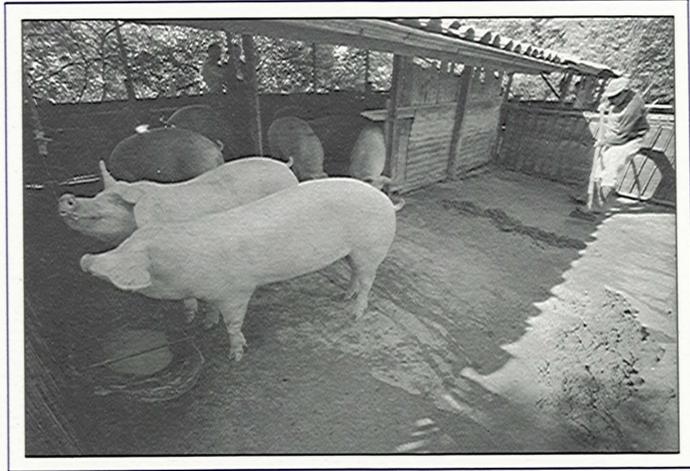
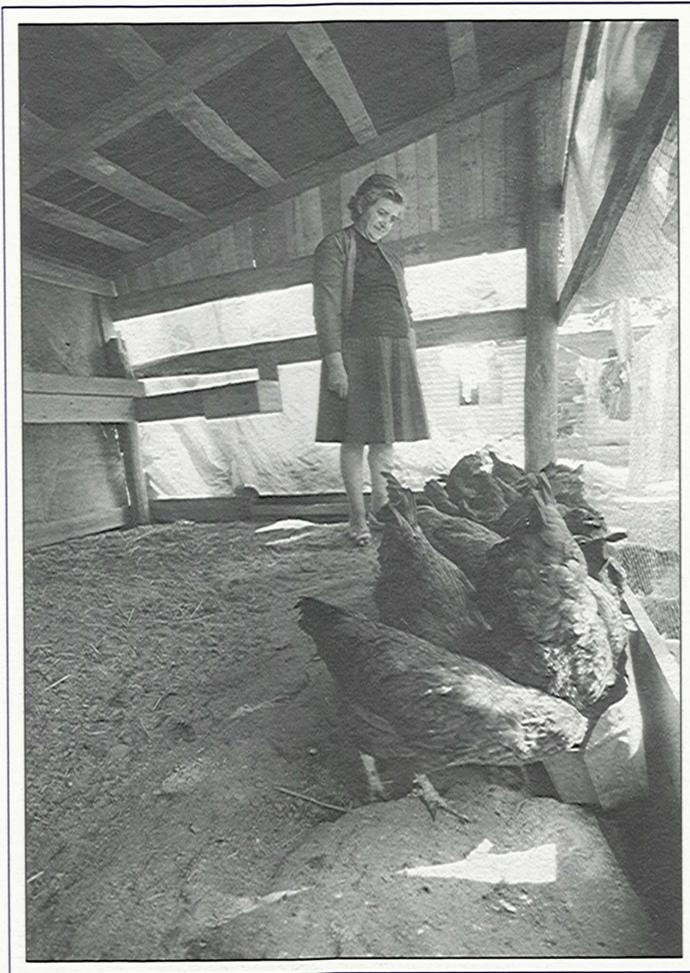
By 1980, the larger farmers no longer saw much advantage to themselves in the cooperative, and they moved to dissolve it. Venegas organized the poorer farmers and landless campesinos who were nominal members and got them to a pivotal meeting. Their votes shifted control of the cooperative and elected Venegas president. Last year, after winning reelection, Venegas resigned because of a temporary health problem. Throughout, he has continued to work on the technical team.

The team's services—including administration of the cooperative and its two stores, monthly visits to each farmer, and individual cropping and credit plans—have been extended to a steadily growing membership. Revolving credit funds, training in production techniques, and marketing information have contributed toward rising incomes. When PACT funding ended, a 1982 IAF grant enabled the technical team to continue working and helped establish a revolving loan fund for production credit. By



Top: Lucho Schmidt (left), COOPEUMO administrator and technical team member, talks with farmers outside the coop's store. Above: Inside, a farmer discusses his dilemma with a clerk: The most popular pesticide is highly toxic, yet the safer brand is nearly eight times as expensive.

Photos by Miguel Savago



Photos by Miguel Savage

COOPEUMO not only assists farmers, but also gives credit to its landless members in and around the town of Peumo. Clockwise from top right: Domingo Aros, of Aguas Claras, used his loan to build a cement floor for his pigpen; a group of women received credit to make toys, becoming such a success in the first year that they sold out their entire inventory at Christmas; Ernestina Nuñez raises chickens in Arboledas with credit from the cooperative.

1986, the cooperative was able to pay for the technical team out of its own revenues, mainly sales from the stores. Meanwhile, the cooperative had taken on a variety of other development goals: helping with reconstruction after the earthquake; fostering home gardens to improve diets; providing vocational training; encouraging cottage industry, particularly for women, to increase family incomes; and providing credit to help landless members raise pigs or chickens or start plant nurseries. In addition to its members, over 500 other people in the valley participate in at least one of the cooperative's varied programs. Recently, COOPEUMO has been organizing young people to survey health conditions and establish minimal health services in five villages.

When Venegas became president in 1980, the valley had just ridden the export of nectarines to its first boom in almost a decade. But the demand for high-quality, unblemished fruit meant a sudden and massive increase in the use of pesticides. At the same time, new, higher-producing, but more fragile varieties of traditional crops like wheat, potatoes, melons, tomatoes, watermelons, and beans were introduced. They, too, required more pesticides.

The valley had always produced fruit for the domestic

market, where profits were low. The international market offered much higher profits, which made good farmland more attractive, driving up its value and increasing the pressures on small and poor farmers to sell out. More fruit was being produced, and when it didn't go abroad, the surplus flooded the local market, again increasing the competitive pressure on small producers who depended on that market to survive. All this combined to force small farmers, like COOPEUMO's members, into a higher stakes game, a game they stayed in by bumping up their own use of fertilizers and pesticides. It took them time to start noticing the side effects.

Now people tell horror stories about how carelessly pesticides were used. "We've all seen farmers mix pesticide solutions with their bare hands," Venegas reminded a group of cooperative members meeting in the town of Pichidegua one night. "They would say it didn't bother them, but they didn't realize the long-range, internal damage they were doing to themselves. We know better now," he continued, but the look he cast around the room was more hopeful than certain. "Myself, I would smoke while I was spraying, which meant I wasn't wearing a face mask, or I'd eat fruit right from the field."

Venegas's admission elicited other expressions of con-

cern about pesticides. "Many times I spray my tomatoes with a bottle of something, and I don't even know what it is," one farmer offered.

"On the big properties," another said, "they dust from airplanes. I remember one day the wind blew the dust away from the fields and over a whole group of houses."

Rosa Muñoz, who tends a health post in Rosario de Codoao Cerro, a community near Peumo, told of women working under the grape arbors, the pesticide powder sifting down into their eyes. "Their eyes puff up, and they have to rest them for two days until the swelling passes," she said. "I myself have worked in the vineyards when someone was spraying in the field right beside us, with the wind blowing towards us."

Research backs up such observations. Studies of pesticide application in the United States show that only about half the chemicals reach the intended field. The rest drifts in the air and settles on surrounding areas and leaches into ground water.

Gustavo Guajardo Arauca, a paramedic at the Mutual de Seguridad clinic in Peumo, confirmed that improper application causes most of the cases of pesticide poisoning he sees. The clinic has insurance contracts with 163 employers in the Cachapoal, covering some 3,600 workers.

Pesticide poisoning cases come most frequently in the summer months of December through February—at least a couple of serious cases a week. "Many people will drink milk as a home remedy," Guajardo said. "We get the more serious ones."

Symptoms include general weakness, vomiting, shallow breathing, racing pulses, and sweating. Depending on the poison, the treatment is intravenous injections of an antidote for two or three days, and at least three more days of rest afterwards.

"The most common problem is that people don't use face masks when they spray," Guajardo said. "They think handkerchiefs over the mouth and nose will protect them. Or they eat fruit from the field they're spraying, or they don't wash their hands afterwards. Another problem is spraying too many days consecutively. But no guidelines are provided. Some workers spray every day for two months, and all that time they're ingesting the poison slowly through the skin and lungs, which is especially dangerous because it builds up to a very high dosage.

"Basically, it's a lack of training. The landowners usually warn the men spraying to be careful, but without any explanation. Most of the workers don't know what they're dealing with. Sometimes, a man will be working alone, and he will faint, and he'll lie in the sprayed field for a couple of hours before he's found. It's not that there's a single cause, or one guilty party. All these factors play a role."

The unsafe practices are at least as common among small-scale farmers, like the members of COOPEUMO, who lack even the rudimentary protections workers on the fundos are supposed to have. There is no one to lecture or cajole if they choose to spray in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt rather than overalls and rubberized suits, hoods, and masks that fit over the nose and mouth. "That gear is so uncomfortable," one farmer said, "that people working in it can't stand the heat. And you can't work with that mask on. It chokes me just spraying the house for flies."

"The gear is expensive," said another. "And heavy. The boots are so heavy they pull out the bean plants when you walk through the rows."

But while they complain about the gear, it's clear that many of the cooperative's members are concerned about the dangers to themselves, to their valley, and to the people who eat their fruit. "It's a quixotic gesture," said one, "to oppose the use of pesticides. But we have to do something. We're destroying the topsoil with these poisons."

"In 50 years," another chimed in, "the earth won't be good for anything. It'll be like salt, like quicklime."

The man next to him nodded. "All the natural enemies of the pests are disappearing," he said. "The wasps, even the birds."

"Our concern," added another, "is not only for our members, but the people living around us. We want to have a clear conscience that we're not poisoning our neighbors, here and abroad, since some of our products are exported."



Miguel Sayago

Jaime Antonio López Martínez, son of coop member Jaime López Peña, works in his father's nursery, which was started with credit from the cooperative. The nursery, on the outskirts of Peumo, serves small farmers in the area.

"We producers have the responsibility," a younger farmer concluded. "The consumer doesn't know the danger."

But the shelves of the cooperative store in the town of Peumo hold a graphic example of the tension between the farmers' good intentions and the economic reality. Folidol is a popular pesticide that costs only 2,000 pesos (around US\$8) a liter but contains Parathion, which is restricted in the United States because of its extreme toxicity to humans and birds. The cooperative also sells a product called Belmark, which is less toxic, and more easily targeted to specific pests. But the same size can costs 15,000 pesos. "If we take Folidol off our shelves, and sell only the safer pesticide," said Venegas, "not even our own members will buy here. So, we can't change from one day to the next. It has to be a process of education, or raising consciousness, of a gradual replacement of the most dangerous products."

The technical team has already begun that process. In

January 1987, it invited a public health expert to run a daylong seminar on the safe use of pesticides for cooperative members. Under the new IAF grant, it will run six training sessions for representatives of each of COOPEUMO's local committees on pesticide hazards to workers, consumers, and the environment; on better ways to control pests; and on proper techniques for applying pesticides. The sessions will emphasize farming practices that control pests naturally and can be complemented by specific rather than broad-spectrum pesticides. Those attending will then help organize similar training sessions in each community to reach at least 400 farmers.

Through these sessions, through dissemination of educational material like pamphlets, film strips, and slides, and through a plan to test wells to see if poisonous residues have leached into ground water, COOPEUMO hopes to raise the general level of awareness in the valley. "There is much in this we can't control," said Carlos Nuñez, a nectarine grower who took over as president when Venegas resigned. "The high cost of these pesticides, for example. But those things that are in our hands—increasing consciousness, teaching people to avoid the dangerous practices, to avoid applying too much—that we can do."

As it proceeds to educate its members, COOPEUMO will begin replacing the more toxic pesticides on its shelves

while stepping up its sales of protective gear. Over the next two years, it will sell at least 100 protective suits at a 40 percent discount. The IAF grant will help the cooperative absorb most of the \$10,000 in expected losses from that subsidy as well as from lost sales of toxic but popular pesticides. By the third year, the team expects its educational program to have convinced farmers of the need to change, and shown them ways to reduce or offset the increased costs.

At dusk in the Cachapual Valley, the pretty, dark-haired girls swing shyly on the gates in front of their houses, chatting with the boys leaning on their bicycles. Tractors and Japanese pickup trucks, an occasional ox-drawn cart, roll down the roads between pencil-straight lines of alamo trees. Sweet purple plums plop softly to the ground in the orchard owned since 1973 by coop member Manuel Antonio Droguett and run with the help of his son, Aldo. The plums, 120,000 kilos of them, will be dried into prunes and exported.

"We sometimes lack a sense of our own history," said Carlos Cabello, as he picked his way through the orchard after a visit to the Droguetts. Cabello, at 35, and Aldo Droguett are part of the cooperative's younger generation. "We forget what life was like before, for campesinos. My mother died from having to get up to work at two or three



Miguel Sayago

Aldo Córdoba Droguett, representative of the coop's younger generation, works in his father's plum orchard, situated on a parcel acquired in 1973 under the land reform act. This generation of farmers escaped the struggle for agrarian reform in the 1960s and 1970s but now must face other problems, including health risks and soil contamination due to pesticide use.

A Question of Responsibility

Several of the members of COOPEUMO who were interviewed about the pesticide dilemma also talked of their responsibility towards the people who eat their fruit. But Norma Rivero, a member of the administrative council, wanted to know whether anyone in the countries that export highly toxic pesticides feels a matching responsibility.

"We're not all ignorant in Latin America," she said. "Why do the United States and other developed countries sell us dangerous pesticides they won't use themselves? And then our fruit is banned because of the residues. We're very aware of the immorality of this. Doesn't anyone there see it?"

Relatively few do, but that may change as more North Americans and others learn about the potential dangers to themselves from pesticides banned for domestic use that may be coming back as residues on imported fruit and vegetables. Three years ago, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) temporarily stopped shipments of Chilean grapes because of pesticide contamination. Many foreign growers think U.S. consumers are protected by the impenetrable shield of the FDA from the merest trace of pesticides. However, a September 1986 report by the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress, painted a different picture.

The report, "Pesticides: Better Sampling and Enforcement Needed on Imported Food," found that less than 1 percent of some one million imported food shipments yearly were sampled for illegal pesticides—those either banned by the Environmental Protection Agency or restricted by permissible levels of concentration. Of the shipments the FDA sampled between 1979 and 1985, 6.1 percent contained illegal or excessive residues. The GAO also found that the tests could detect less than half the varieties of chemical pesticides in use worldwide. Finally, it found that the majority of sampled shipments were permitted to enter the U.S. market before test results



Miguel Saavedra

COOPEUMO administrative council member Norma Romero (center) speaks out on the area's pesticide problem during a meeting at the coop's headquarters in Peumo.

were completed. In a sample of 164 shipments later found to be adulterated, 73 could not be recovered and were presumed to have been consumed by the public.

In the wake of the report, some steps have been taken to tighten inspection procedures. More significant are the attempts to increase knowledge by exchanging information about which pesticides are used where, and on what crops, in order to permit more informed sampling of imports. Meanwhile, a growing awareness of the threats to their people's health and to their booming produce trade have spurred countries such as Chile and Mexico to set up laboratories to check residues on their crops. And more and more countries, Chile included, are beginning to ban a lengthening list of the most toxic pesticides.

o'clock in the morning because the fundo owner said so. She caught a cold, got weaker and weaker, and finally died. Things have changed a lot in the countryside since then. Before, who had a refrigerator, a radio, a television, even if it's only black and white? Now, we get the benefits from our own work."

Development is usually about the material things that go into the higher standard of living that most poor people want for themselves and for their children, and about the dignity that comes from participating in decisions, from having some control over one's own life. COOPEUMO, by any measure, has been a success at bringing development to its members.

The pesticide problem that now preoccupies the cooperative demonstrates that each step in development brings new challenges. It also underlines how so many of the challenges facing people in Latin America and the

Caribbean—illegal immigration, destruction of the rain forests, drug traffic, and now the dangers of pesticides—link rich countries and poor alike. The poisonous circle joins pesticide producers in industrial countries, workers and consumers in poor countries, and consumers back in the industrial countries. Like the canaries coal miners used to take into the shafts because they succumbed first to dangerous gases, the birds falling in the Cachapoal may be an early-warning system for us all. ♦

*PATRICK BRESLIN, who holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of California at Los Angeles, is the IAF research and evaluations officer. He is the author of *Interventions*, a novel about Chile, and, most recently, *Development and Dignity*, a history of the Inter-American Foundation's first 15 years. Danielle C. Harris's research on the fruit trade and pesticide use contributed to this article.*

LA FERIA EDUCATIVA

A Wellspring of Ideas and Cultural Pride

Chuck Kleymeyer and Carlos Moreno

By speaking to audiences in their own language, a group of young Quechua musicians is encouraging the people of Ecuador's Chimborazo Province to organize and run their own grassroots development projects.



Julia Weise-Vargas

In the village plaza, a dozen campesinos—each wearing a red poncho and a dark felt hat—formed a tight knot around a single figure standing in the center. Each person spoke intently, gesturing with a hand that came out from under a poncho woven of handspun wool, only long enough to emphasize a point before returning to its warm haven.

The dozen men had come from a neighboring village in the Ecuadorian highlands to watch a performance of the Feria Educativa, or Educational Fair. The Feria, a group of young indigenous musicians—male and female—had spent the entire Sunday afternoon in the village plaza, playing traditional Quechua songs, inviting local campesinos to dance, staging skitlike sociodramas, putting on a puppet show, and encouraging members of the audience to comment on how situations dramatized by the performers were related to local problems, as well as what might be done to find solutions.

The sociodrama that received the most enthusiastic response portrayed an illiterate campesino who was taken advantage of by a sharp operator who was able to read an important letter and then mislead him regarding its contents. Many in the crowd nodded their heads and murmured during that scene, acknowledging similar experiences as a result of their inability to read.

After the Feria Educativa had sung its final song and the tremor of the mandolin-like *charango* had died out, most of the audience left for home. Except, that is, for the men from the neighboring village who had spotted a trainer from the government's new literacy program. They swiftly surrounded him and demanded that he set a date to visit their village to help establish their own adult literacy training center. Identifying with the plight of the illiterate campesino in the sociodrama who not only lacked a vital skill, but one that was his due as a member of Ecuadorian society, they felt the time had come to do something, and they would accept no excuses.

The trainer, whose nights were already filled teaching in his own vil-



Photos by Julia Weise-Vargas

Top: Feria Educativa members rehearse at the campesino training and promotion center in Riobamba, Chimborazo Province. Known as Nukanchis Huasi (Quechua for "our house"), the center also serves as the Feria's headquarters. Above: An audience identifies with Feria member Arturo León, who portrays a *cargador* (porter) in a sociodrama about the perils of urban migration.

lage, finally agreed to visit them the following Sunday. He added that he would bring along the area supervisor, the person who could actually assign a teacher to a new literacy training center if the villagers prevailed (which they did).

Seldom are the effects of the Feria's work so immediately visible. Their primary task is a long-term one: to

spark campesino organizations in Chimborazo Province to participate in a broad program of local development. Indeed, the Feria Educativa frequently provides the first contact Chimborazo campesinos have with the innovative program managed by the Servicio Ecuatoriano de Voluntarios-Chimborazo (SEV).

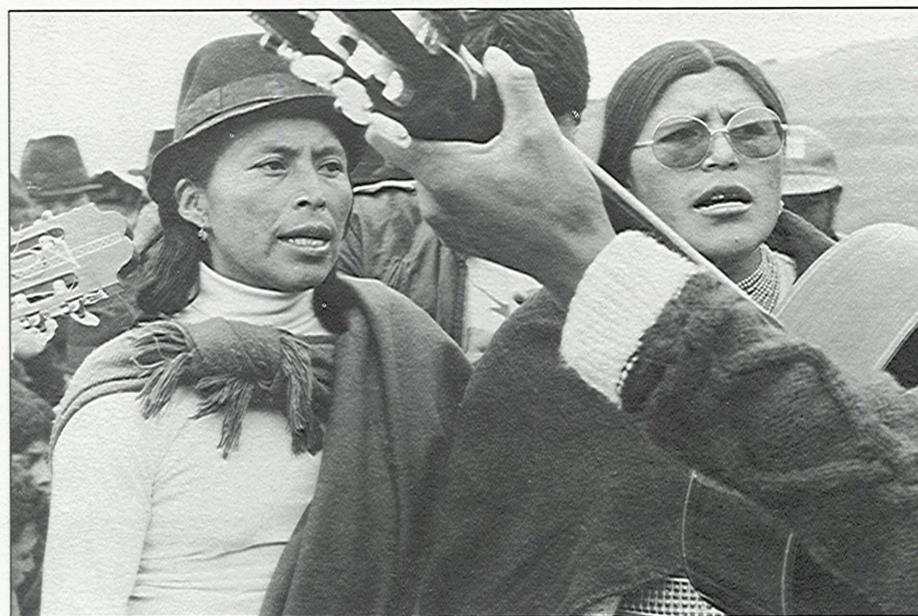
The SEV program evolved from an

earlier effort by the government-sponsored Unidad de Educación para el Desarrollo, whose main task was to implement a national literacy campaign. Both organizations use adult education as a platform for a variety of development activities in indigenous villages, including literacy training centers, communal bakeries, self-managed artisanal workshops, reforestation efforts, and other community and organizational development activities.

Over the 15-year period from 1975 to 1989, the grassroots efforts of Unidad and SEV, in which the FERIA has played a central role, will have received \$1.2 million from the Inter-American Foundation. An additional \$1.1 million was raised in counterpart donations—in cash, labor, materials, and land—from indigenous communities and public and private entities.

To appreciate the significance of this effort, it is necessary to take a closer look at the history of grassroots development in Chimborazo. The province has one of the highest concentrations of poverty-stricken native peoples in South America. Living in more than 1,000 villages, at altitudes that sometimes exceed 4,500 meters, the quarter of a million inhabitants of the province have only recently emerged from an exploitative hacienda system that greatly limited their possibilities for self-sufficiency, social advancement, and economic growth. Nature has been no kinder, ravaging the land with drought, freezes, landslides, and severe soil erosion.

For more than two decades, streams of national and international organizations have set up shop in Chimborazo, offering relief and change. Typically, the representatives of these organizations, whether public or private, have been white-collar professionals with social and cultural backgrounds far removed from those of local people. Usually these representatives would drive into villages accessible to the Pan American Highway and meet with a small group of leaders, invariably men, explaining to them in Spanish how the given institution was prepared to improve the lives of local residents. Lip service to "popular participation" often re-



Photos by Julia Weise-Vargas

Top: Crowds of campesinos arrive for an afternoon performance of the FERIA Educativa in a typical highland community in Chimborazo. Above: FERIA members Paulina Paca (left) and María Ajitimbay sing traditional songs in Quechua. With support from the FERIA, 12 women's music groups have formed throughout the province.

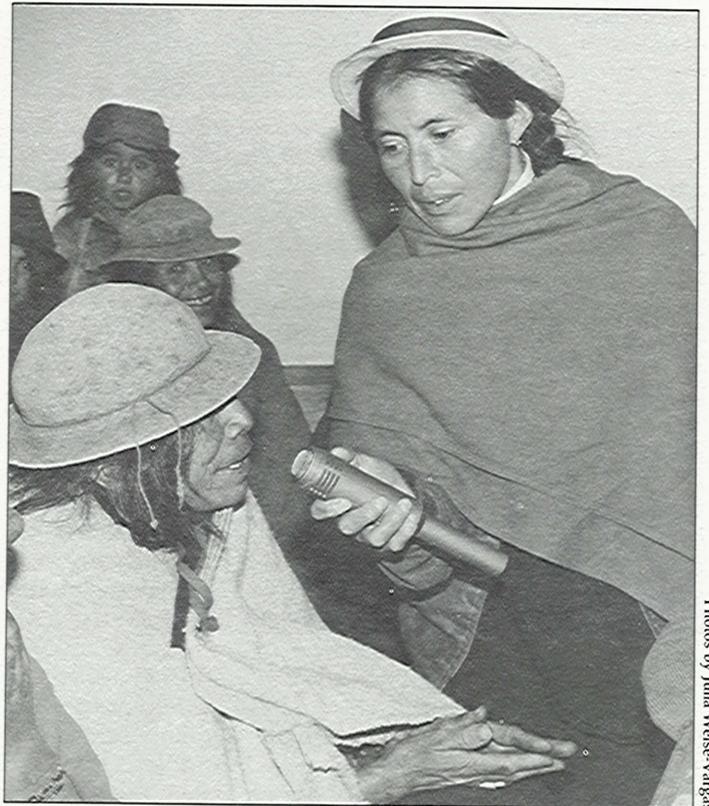
quired a question-and-answer period that concluded with a request for campesino representatives to attend all future meetings. Then the technicians and functionaries would pile into their jeeps for the three-hour drive back to Quito. Unfortunately, in spite of much good will and massive expenditures of national and foreign funds, the ma-

jority of these programs failed, and little evidence of their presence remains today.

Despite these experiences, the people of Chimborazo have not given up their often-expressed hopes for broad-based development within a context of social justice. The most successful grassroots programs have emerged



Counterclockwise from above: Residents of Bazán openly display their delight during a skit; behind the scenes at a puppet show; Paulina Paca turns over the microphone in mid-performance to a woman in the audience. Ten years ago, campesino women rarely, if ever, spoke in public.



Photos by Julia Weise-Vargas



Julia Wiese-Vargas

Following a performance in Bazán, village leaders discuss their community's needs with Feria member María Ajitimbay (second from right). The Feria Educativa often provides the first knowledge Chimborazo campesinos have of assistance available through the innovative grassroots development program managed by the Servicio Ecuatoriano de Voluntarios-Chimborazo.

from the province itself—from communities, federations, and urban-based private support organizations. In the case of Unidad/SEV, a group of individuals, many of them born in indigenous villages, believed they could do better than the outsiders. Over the years, many of them had been involved in those earlier efforts, and knew firsthand their strengths and weaknesses.

In 1974, a small group of these people formed the Feria Educativa to promote cultural revitalization and self-help efforts among the Quechua-speaking masses in their own language and on their own terms. After much training, refining, and maturing, the Feria began to emerge as an important force in development

throughout the province, facilitating a broad mix of strategies and methodologies that stand in stark contrast to the earlier incursions.

Above all, the Feria's task is to gain rapport with indigenous communities, explaining what is possible—and what is not—within the broader development program. The campesinos of Chimborazo, with their long history of being on the wrong end of conquest, repression, and exploitation in their relations with hacienda and city, are understandably wary of investing limited resources and social energy in yet another scheme imported from above and beyond their village setting.

The Feria Educativa has a noticeably different approach. It enters a vil-

lage only by invitation and then is often held hostage there until well after midnight. Feria performers—themselves indigenous people—arrive in traditional dress, playing local music, singing songs in Quechua, and getting the audience to dance. Only after trust is established and the lines of communication are in place do Feria members begin to encourage people to identify their most important problems and consider what concrete steps can be taken to find viable solutions. The Feria Educativa does not offer answers, and does not make direct suggestions or promises about specific project possibilities. Their sociodramas and puppet shows typically sketch out a common problem—illiteracy, unresponsive or abusive authorities,

discrimination against indigenous people who migrate to the cities, poverty, the lack of schools and teachers. Then, almost in midperformance, they halt abruptly and the floor is given to members of the audience, many of whom have been commenting openly or talking to each other or laughing in recognition, at times in discomfort, throughout the presentation.

Sometimes a woman will speak out in favor of establishing a local weekly market, or a man will ask how a neighboring village was able to start a community bakery or plant a mountainside with trees. But often people will simply make statements about the performance and how it resembles, or differs from, their own experiences. According to the Feria's strategy, this collective recognition of how a problem is rooted within the local reality is a prerequisite for building the resolve and summoning the energy and creativity necessary to identify and implement solutions. Sometimes action results immediately. But usually the Feria's visit is just the first step in a long process of reflection, critique, design, and planning.

This democratic, nondirective approach to helping people analyze their situation is carried out by employing the audience's own world view, having first captivated them with their own songs and dances. This requires more than holding the audience's attention. It means being able to listen to new ideas that emerge from the people themselves. What makes the dialogue work is the Feria's ability to speak in the local idiom, using local symbols, with a constant flow back and forth of energy and humor. Accomplishing this is more than second nature, it is first nature—since every member of the Feria was born and raised in a Quechua village of Chimborazo. They do not simply capture the essence of the local people, they embody that essence.

Feria members know implicitly that offering pedantic or simplistic suggestions can be offensive, and can arouse suspicions about hidden agendas. Realizing that campesinos generally know what needs to be accomplished, even though they may be unclear as to exactly how it can be



After a Feria presentation in Chunchi, residents spread out a meal of mote (hominy) to be enjoyed by the whole community. Since 1979, the Feria has visited over 750 such communities throughout the province, many of which are joining together to form local federations. There are now nine, representing over 150 villages and organizations.

done, the Feria focuses its work on strategies more than on specific goals. And since local people set their own agendas, programs rarely need to be sold. Demand for project support from Unidad/SEV has consistently overwhelmed available resources.

While numbers alone cannot adequately describe the Feria's impact on the communities of Chimborazo, they carry their own special weight. Consider the following:

- When the Feria was formed in 1974, there were only two campesino music groups in the province that promoted traditional music. Now over 100 such groups are either collecting and preserving traditional music, or simply performing it. At least 12 of them have been formed by women.

- The Feria Educativa itself has conducted 10 training programs for young musicians, helped more than 100 musical groups to form, sponsored four festivals of traditional music and dance, made three cassette tapes for sale locally, published a song book and several pamphlets on local history and traditional arts, and collected and performed countless songs, riddles, and dances.

- Since 1979, the Feria has visited over 750 communities throughout the province.

- These contacts helped pave the way for the local literacy training effort that established 1,050 training centers at the community level, achieving virtually blanket coverage of the province and becoming the most successful such program in Ecuador.

- Due to the Feria's promotional work, the Unidad de Educación para el Desarrollo was able to establish 32 community bakeries and 45 artisan-managed workshops, and to help villages build 145 community centers and plant more than 200,000 trees in reforestation efforts.

- These communities are joining together to form local federations. There are now nine, representing over 150 villages and organizations. Many of

The Feria Educativa appeals to children as well as adults. Top: Three girls await a performance in Cacha Chuyug. Right: Boys gather on a playground in El Lirio.



Photos by Julia Weise-Vargas

these federations sponsor their own cultural revitalization efforts and integrate them with training, production, and community development activities.

Not all of these accomplishments can be credited solely to the work of the FERIA Educativa. On the other hand, it is difficult to argue that they would have happened without the FERIA. Indeed, in other provinces they did not happen.

Other results of the FERIA's work may not be as quantifiable, but they are observable nonetheless. Ten years ago in Chimborazo Province, campesino women rarely, if ever, spoke at public gatherings, and as late as five years ago, they never played musical instruments in any setting. Now women are increasingly speaking out at meetings, and a number of women's musical groups have formed with help from the FERIA (see box on p. 40). In contrast to the past, campesinos now regularly express pride in their native language, and want literacy programs and schooling conducted in both Spanish and Quechua. Community leaders who viewed previous development programs with suspicion now crowd into SEV's offices, especially on market day, to present typed requests for a teacher, a training program, or funds for planting communal lands, building a community center, or reforesting an eroded mountainside.

In helping motivate these changes, the FERIA itself has changed. It has doubled from six to twelve members, two of them women whose presence as group spokespersons has had significant symbolic impact on women throughout the province. Many of the performers who joined as teenage students have now assumed additional responsibilities or moved on to other positions related to campesino development. One is a schoolteacher, another is a municipal authority and federation leader, yet another is the director of a major development program. Meanwhile, demand for the FERIA's services has increased—for training as well as performing, in the cities as well as in the countryside.

The history of the FERIA, like the dance music it performs, has been generally upbeat but has also had its



share of dilemmas and disappointments. The FERIA's message and style have not been universally accepted. Once a performance in a Quito theater was abruptly halted for being "inappropriate" for such a setting. On another occasion, a provincial authority complained about "indios" being allowed to manage development activities. All of this opposition has been sporadic and ultimately ineffectual. Other, more subtle societal pressures have had a greater impact: The passing of the years has seen the men of the FERIA wear their ponchos less and less, and the group has begun to shift away from traditional music towards playing more pieces in the mode of modern protest songs popular throughout Latin America.

The FERIA Educativa has also had to resist political and commercial pressures. Many would like to profit from or co-opt a group and a method that has so successfully won the trust and the ear of campesinos. As a group, the FERIA has scrupulously avoided partisan politics. To date, the FERIA has also turned aside offers to record their music for purely economic gain



Dozens of artisan-managed workshops have flourished following contact with the FERIA. Top: In El Lirio, a weaver puts the finishing touches on a poncho. Above: A potter kneads clay in Cacha Chuyug.

Photos by Julia Weise-Vargas

Just Like Us

On a cold, moonlit night in a remote shepherds' village in southern Chimborazo, we stooped under the thatched roof of an adobe schoolhouse to pass through the small doorway. Inside the single room, dimly lit by an ancient Petromax lantern, the dirt floor had been worn smooth by bare feet. We nodded our greetings to the class of adult literacy students sitting on wooden benches before us, and counted 17 women, many of them carrying infants on their backs, wrapped in woven blankets. Eight men were also present, most of them over 50 years old. All of the faces that stared at us showed the fatigue of the day's work in the fields and the household.

We had come to this scattering of huts high upon an Andean slope to find out why an adult bilingual literacy training center had been formed in a place so isolated and devoid of other services and infrastructure. The trainer, a woman from the same community, took the floor to explain:

"Some months ago, a group of indigenous musicians calling themselves 'Feria Educativa' passed through here. They performed in this very room. Their stories and music got us to reflect on our lives, our reality, and our needs. After they left, the community asked me to teach reading and writing, and how to organize ourselves to improve conditions for ourselves and our children."

Then she asked if we would like to hear some music. We quickly accepted, and someone left the room to bring

back a group of seven young women, none of them older than 18. Shyly, they lined up in front of us and brought simple instruments out from under their shawls. Drums and tambourines and maracas. One young woman gave a signal, and with a burst they began to play their instruments and sing in high, clear voices. They performed with a verve that kept our eyes riveted on their faces and made us forget our cold hands and feet and our empty stomachs. Forcing ourselves to look at the crowd, we saw backs straightening up and eyes brightening. Every face in the room glowed with pride.

When they finished, everyone applauded enthusiastically. We urged them to sing again, and they did, treating us to the same song. More applause, sweetened with laughter this time. As a pot of steaming potatoes was brought in and passed around, we asked the inevitable visitor's question: "How did your group form?"

The leader laughed nervously and said, "Some musicians came through our town, and they helped us."

"What were they called?" we asked. "The Feria Educativa?"

"They were called María," she answered, "and Paulina."

Then she added, "They're Quechua women. Just like us."

—C.K. and C.M.

and become paid performers. They have chosen to continue their grassroots development activities, and are using their tapes and booklets to increase their potential for self-financing.

Ironically, the greatest challenge the group faces may be in coping with its own success at promoting grassroots development. The time and interest the members have recently put into preparing for expanded roles as project managers in the SEV development program has made the group more bureaucratic and more inwardly focused. For a while, the challenge of becoming development specialists brought them to a point where they almost ceased performing at all. In attempting to balance the two roles, they risk not carrying out either one effectively. The solution may be the emergence of new ferias, perhaps

among the many musicians and groups the Feria Educativa has trained at the local level.

Meanwhile, the idea of using culture as a development tool is not confined to the Feria or Chimborazo. In other settings, similar cultural groups have formed independently among the Black population of the Chota Valley in northern Ecuador and within the Society of Deaf Adults of Quito.

But no matter what happens to the original Feria, it remains a rich source of ideas and of burgeoning campesino support for local development programs at both the community and the federation level. Continually demonstrating its participatory, constructive, and creative working style, it has done much to promote organization-building within and among farflung communities. By revitalizing indige-

nous identity and pride, it has been a cultural means to promote development ends, as well as a cultural end in itself. Perhaps most important, it has been an example for all the people of Chimborazo, and Ecuador, of what indigenous people can accomplish by drawing upon their own internal resources and cultural heritage. ◆

CHUCK KLEYMEYER, who holds a Ph.D. in development studies from the University of Wisconsin, has been an IAF field representative in the Andean region since 1979. He is currently writing a book on the relationship between cultural expression and grassroots development. CARLOS MORENO, former director of the Unidad de Educación para el Desarrollo and current adviser to the Servicio Ecuatoriano de Voluntarios-Chimborazo, was a founder of the Feria Educativa.

Whatever Happened to Nonformal Education?

Suzanne Kindervatter

Development, like most other disciplines, is subject to periodic fads. The library of books and articles about nonformal education (NFE) that I collected in the mid-1970s, when a spirited debate on the subject raged among development planners and programmers, has now grown dusty on its shelves. The debate has died, and with it, some might argue, so has nonformal education.

To me, that conclusion is premature. While NFE may be less visible, it continues to exert a profound influence on development thinking and practice.

Breaking Out of the Sectoral Mold

Nonformal education developed largely as a response to the failure of schools to make educational opportunities available and relevant to poor populations. Initial thinking about NFE encompassed a range of activities related to rural development. However, the term eventually became linked with programs for illiterate adults and out-of-school youth, and could be found as a division or department within ministries of education.

Hidden beneath this sectoral focus is the real potential of nonformal education to serve as a vehicle for all kinds of development activities. My view of the way NFE works—people defining their needs and taking action to meet them—is not only good education, it is good development. Agricultural schemes and urban housing programs alike must take into account what motivates people, and how they can become committed to change for themselves and their communities.

My experience with self-employment programs for low-income women in Central America and

Africa illustrates that process. Through materials especially geared for people with minimal literacy skills and through a pedagogy that emphasizes problem-posing and learning-by-doing, women in these programs learned about business planning and management, improved their methods of production, and acquired an understanding of how to gain and maintain access to credit. Some of the skills imparted were quite sophisticated. For instance, participants learned how to carry out their own feasibility studies, developing their capacities not only to calculate costs and project incomes but strengthening their abilities to manage their own microbusinesses.

Over the years, I have encountered a rich variety of technical programs—from a health project in Sri Lanka, to pig husbandry in Honduras, to agroforestry in Somalia—all using nonformal education as an effective tool. Whatever the particular technical focus at hand, I have been struck by the high energy level and involvement of the participants.

Building Skills for Effective Participation

Paulo Freire's legacy to NFE has been enormous, and the application of his ideas has steadily evolved. Freire always emphasized the integration of awareness and action, but early interpreters of his ideas tended to focus on the first step—"promoting critical consciousness." Today, programs are moving beyond "conscientization" in order to foster the skills needed to solve problems once they have been analyzed.

The Program for Education and Participation (PEP) in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras is a good

example. PEP, which is sponsored by OEF International (formerly the Overseas Education Fund), works with community organizations that have mobilized to improve social services, protect land rights, or respond to some other local issue. Training programs assist groups to examine their problems in depth, design strategies and plans of action, and carry them out. In the process, participants learn advocacy skills such as using the media for public information campaigns and lobbying government institutions and representatives for resources or redress of grievances. The program not only strengthens the infrastructure and effectiveness of local organizations, it also fosters individual and community empowerment.

Making NFE Accountable

Several years ago, a participant in a community education program I worked with in Thailand described the profound impact of NFE on her life by saying: "I now like to get up in the morning." In those days, such changes in self-esteem were often viewed as ends in themselves. More recently, with concerns for cost-effectiveness foremost in the minds of donors, the pendulum has swung the other way. Increased self-esteem is now sometimes looked at as "soft" or not really important.

In my experience, this is not an either/or choice, but a progression in which a greater sense of personal efficacy is a precondition for taking action to improve one's life.

Admittedly, given the current trend toward valuing what can be measured, we need to create better ways to document gains in individual attitudes and social relationships. Such efforts are underway,

Development Notes

one of them by the PVO "Small Enterprise Education and Promotion" (SEEP) Network, which recently compiled a manual on the evaluation of small enterprise programs. A major section of the book explores the use of specific indicators and tools for assessing social gains, including "changes in role relations," "the ability to work together as a group," and the degree of "influence on systems that cause poverty."

In trying to measure the usefulness of NFE, it is instructive to keep in mind the words of a Sri Lankan microentrepreneur who participated in a program based on nonformal educational methods. "The program did not come like the monsoon, quickly deluging us and as suddenly going away. It was like a gentle rain, steady and penetrating. We shall never forget what we learned here."

What I have seen convinces me that the "disappearance" of NFE is only an optical illusion. It has vanished as a fad and has been absorbed into the mainstream of development activities and the lives of their participants. The challenge that remains is to refine and document what has been learned so that NFE becomes more widely recognized as an essential and effective tool for grassroots development. ◆

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Opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of the Inter-American Foundation. The editors of *Grassroots Development* invite contributions from readers.

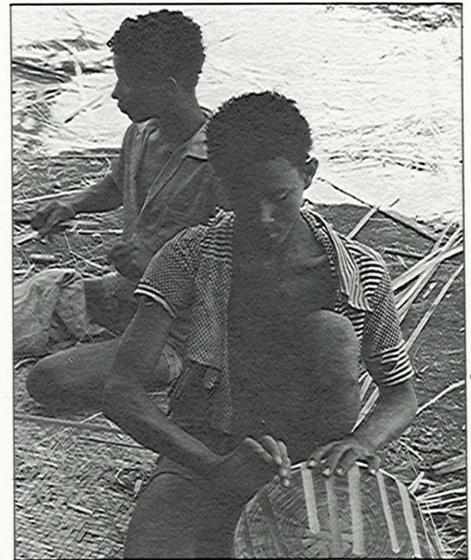
ARE MICROENTERPRISES ENDS IN THEMSELVES?

Productive projects, those that generate employment and income for the poor, are a virtually unquestioned tenet of faith in grassroots development. Indeed, on the surface, the idea of enabling the poor to make some money with which to better assure their survival, and perhaps even progress to the point where they can climb out of poverty into a higher economic class, appears uncontested. The dictum "Give a man a job and the rest will take care of itself" seems truer now than ever.

But does "the rest" really take care of itself? Are productive projects in and of themselves a sufficient strategy for dealing with the complex range of problems facing the poor? Will having more money also open access to housing, health care, and educational opportunities?

Unfortunately, the answer cannot be a resounding "yes" or "no," but only a "maybe." Poor people lack not only money but, more important, the power needed to obtain vital services and shape their environment. Given that reality, the questions we should be asking are: When and how do productive projects help people gain real control over their lives, and when do they make them even more powerless?

It was with precisely these concerns that a group of 20 Brazilian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) gathered in the city of Carpina, in northeastern Brazil, for a four-day seminar last March. The meeting, which the IAF sponsored, had been planned by a working group of representatives from five Brazilian organizations with long experience in community development. Together they identified six areas for discussion, each of which was introduced and framed by seminar participants especially chosen for their knowledge on these topics:



Edgar Ricardo von Buelther

Productive activities carried out by women and youth, such as these young basket weavers, were discussed at a seminar in Carpina, Brazil.

- the contribution of productive activities to the process of community development;
- the relationship between productive activities and popular education;
- productive activities carried out by women and youth;
- the impact of productive activities on the implementing organizations;
- reflections on the Brazilian economic scene and the role of small-scale productive projects; and
- case studies of experiences in evolution—difficulties, successes, failures, regional characteristics, and future perspectives.

Since participating NGOs were represented by seasoned field staff, discussions were based upon experience rather than theoretical speculation. Various regions of Brazil were represented—from the northeastern state of Piauí to the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul—providing opportunity for the cross-fertilization of ideas between groups working in different socioeconomic contexts. While the spe-

cific activities carried out by each of the NGOs varied, most representatives justified their productive projects as a necessary starting point for broader-based community development efforts. The generation of even modest amounts of income creates a material basis for freeing the poor from the most immediate forms of economic exploitation, political clientelism, and, particularly in the case of women, social domination. Productive projects must not only be economically successful, they should also involve the poor in an educational process that builds self-sufficiency and self-confidence.

At the close of the seminar, participants voted to create an informal structure for following up on many of the valuable recommendations that had been made. Six representatives were elected to a commission charged with establishing mechanisms for ongoing exchanges and networking among interested Brazilian NGOs, surveying the various sources of domestic financial support for productive activities, and publishing a newsletter.

—Bradford Smith

FOSTERING ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Five-hundred years after Columbus's voyage to the New World, the Spanish people will again have ample cause for celebration. The year 1992 not only marks the end of Spain's transition into the European Economic Community, it also brings the Summer Olympics to Barcelona, and the World's Fair to Sevilla. And the country's economy—once sluggish—is growing nearly twice as rapidly as the rest of Europe.

This spirit of rejuvenation is reflected in the government's plan to triple its foreign assistance budget to nearly US\$1 billion in 1992, with the bulk going to Latin America and

a smaller percentage to Africa.

While the increase may seem quixotic in light of the economic and social problems that have plagued the country for so long, Spain is in its strongest position in decades to offer such assistance. With a booming economy and a new tradition of stable democracy, Spain is confidently renewing its cultural and economic ties with Latin countries. Felipe González, Spain's Socialist prime minister, views the increased aid as an opportunity to "lower the political temperature in Latin America by fostering economic progress in the region."

The task at hand is to devise a comprehensive strategy for delivering aid. Alvaro Rengifo, an economist with Spain's Department of Commerce, recently completed a five-month assignment with the Inter-American Foundation designed to help him in his role as an architect of that plan. At the same time, Rengifo completed coursework at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., on a Fulbright scholarship awarded because of his unique proposal to help Spain scale up its overseas development efforts. He chose Washington so he could combine firsthand experience at a variety of development organizations with university coursework on economic development and social change, which was unavailable in Spain.

During his term at the Inter-American Foundation, Rengifo worked side by side with staff members—helping field representatives prepare project reviews, participating in semiannual evaluations of country portfolios, and writing project histories. To balance out his experience, Rengifo will spend time at other development organizations, such as the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development. That will be followed by a term in the Ivory Coast, where he

will serve as Spanish Trade Commissioner.

Rengifo's desire is clear and constant: "In Spain there is a lack of any kind of development tradition, and skepticism towards philanthropy. Our motives are generally more to maintain political linkages with former colonies. Increasing foreign aid is also a prerequisite for entry into the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which would enable us to catch up with the rest of Europe, as we have been trying to do since entry into the EEC. My goal is to learn as much as possible about Third World development in order to help other people facilitate that process."

—Allison Lange

TEN YEARS AFTER ALMA ATA

Ten years ago, representatives of 150 countries met at Alma Ata, a small village in the Soviet Union, to participate in discussions that gave birth to the primary health care movement. Adopting the ambitious slogan of "Health Care for All by the Year 2000," the conference decided that "the principles of equity, access, effectiveness, affordability, and community involvement should guide health policies, programs, and resource allocation."

Over 1,300 health care professionals convened last May in Washington, D.C., to reaffirm those ideas at the National Council on International Health's 15th International Health Conference—"Ten Years After Alma Ata: Health Progress, Problems and Future Priorities." At lectures, workshops, and roundtables during the three-day conference, experts from around the world discussed a wide range of topics—from research, technology, and education in primary health



Mitchell Denburg

The 15th International Health Conference concluded that if primary health care is to work, women such as Peruvian physician Teresa Sandoval, shown here with a patient, must share key decision-making positions with men.

care; to traditional medicine; to the impact of AIDS.

The search for solutions was not confined to promising new technologies; it also emphasized the importance of redefining social roles to make primary health care work more effectively. According to Sandra Huffman of the Center to Prevent Childhood Malnutrition, "If health care for all is to be achieved by the year 2000, then women must share the responsibilities, the key decision-making positions, and the services equally with men. Clearly, the solution requires a political approach at the highest levels of government, with women participating in the establishment of priorities and the implementation of programs."

Citing the Center's work with nongovernmental organizations in Lima, Peru, to combat poverty and health problems among the residents of urban slums, Huffman emphasized the importance of organiz-

ing neighborhood kitchens and daycare centers to improve diets, reduce costs, generate funds for neighborhood improvements, increase indigenous leadership capacity, and improve the status of women. Huffman pointed out that in Peru, as in most of Latin America, "Government-sponsored child care programs are limited, and few are designed to meet the needs of working women, especially low-income women. Community-based centers may be a suitable alternative that can lead to improvements in child health while allowing mothers to more easily earn money to help their families survive."

In his closing address, Dr. Halfdan Mahler, director-general of the World Health Organization, echoed the importance of broadened participation by saying, "The biggest challenge facing development practitioners is to design a health credo based on social justice. What is needed is not necessarily more technology, but more widespread application of existing technology." There was broad agreement among conference participants that successful health policies must enable the most disadvantaged groups to promote their own health, and must support the inclusion of women in the development process.

—Catherine M. Sarri

A GLOBAL WORKSHOP ON VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, New Mexico, proved an ideal setting for the second annual Peter van Dresser Workshop on Village Development. Known primarily as an adult study center, the ranch is also an important regional support center for communities in northern New Mexico, making its pastureland available for winter grazing, working with area residents to se-

cure land and water rights, and sponsoring the High Desert Research Center to preserve and improve species adapted to high-altitude areas where water is at a premium and soil is poor.

Highlighting dilemmas faced by developing communities around the globe—from northern New Mexico to the distant Himalayas—this year's van Dresser workshop attracted a wide range of community development workers and funders, journalists, university professors, and specialists in appropriate technology for three days of intensive discussion. Keynote speaker Helena Norberg-Hodge, a native of Sweden who has lived for eight years in the Himalayan valleys around Ladakh, put those problems in context by providing a richly illustrated portrayal of what happens when a traditional society is inundated by the wave of "development," when jumps in statistical indicators such as GNP are mistaken for an improved quality of life, whatever the cost to local cultures and ecologies.

A series of short presentations on community-controlled credit programs, tourism, and solar energy and other alternative technologies was followed by in-depth workshops on four themes suggested by participants: financing village-based development, the impact and ethics of tourism, participation in the development process, and strategies for community action in the United States. The finance panel stressed the importance of generating local resources and finding private funding rather than reflexively relying on government assistance for start-up capital. The task group on tourism suggested that measuring the trade-offs between new jobs and the erosion of cultural integrity requires asking hard questions: Who pays, who benefits, what is gained, and what is taken away? The Taos Pueblo and the kingdom of Bhutan were cited as contrasting examples

of how different-sized communities can beneficially control the terms of the tourist trade.

The workshop on participation looked at what stimulates and what stifles community involvement. While applauding the growing attention to this issue among development practitioners, panelists cautioned against presuming that full participation is appropriate to all stages and types of projects. Leadership styles and levels of participation vary according to specific tasks at hand.

The panel on development strategies in the United States highlighted the need to "act local," to look for community initiatives that are self-reliant and self-sustaining. By emphasizing the importance of replacing a mentality of competition with one of mutual aid and cooperation, the discussions also stressed the importance of putting networks and linkages to work in support of local initiatives.

—Marion Ritchey Vance

FOCUSING ON THE GRASSROOTS

"When you have the bird's-eye view, you cannot always see the grass, much less the roots. What you need is the worm's-eye view," said Muhammad Yunus, founder and managing director of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. In his keynote address to the 1988 annual conference of the Washington chapter of the Society for International Development (SID), Yunus reminded the academics and development practitioners in attendance that simple problems often become complicated when problem solvers are too far removed from local reality. "Solutions must come from the people," he stressed.

Entitled "Learning from the Grassroots," the April conference featured speakers and participants from large and small development and relief organizations from the United States and abroad, and offered area high school students a chance to learn about developing

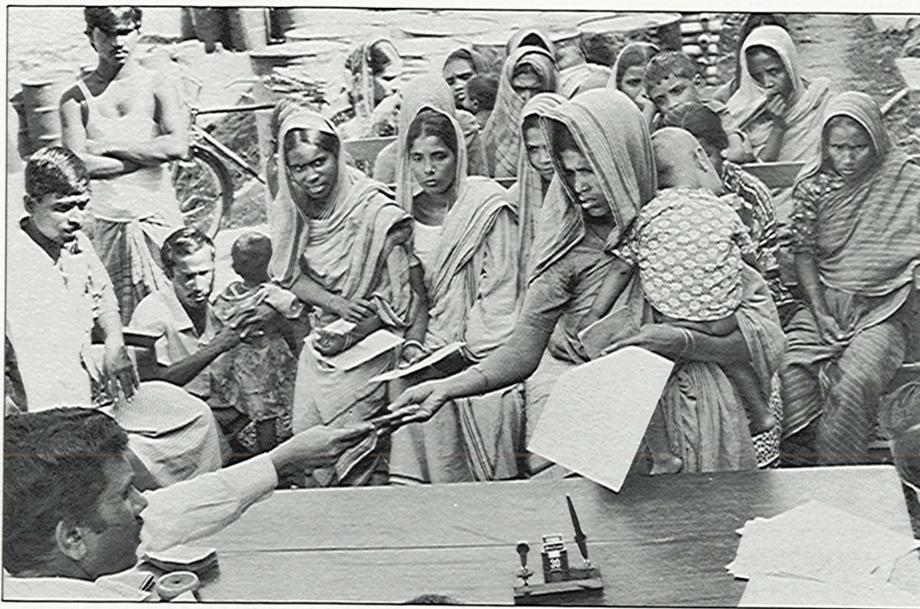
countries. Interaction between speakers and participants was lively, sparking discussions about problem-solving techniques in a variety of settings, the role of grassroots development in the relationship between North and South, and the relationship between donors and grantees.

SID's first conference to focus on grassroots issues boasted a record attendance of 360 members: a cross-section of World Bank representatives, students, consultants, and other development professionals that constituted a 30 percent increase over last year's conference, which concentrated on issues in business and development.

The Grameen Bank, which has recently been hailed as a model for providing credit to the poor, was one of a variety of grassroots organizations sharing their approaches with traditional development funders. The bank is 75 percent owned by its borrowers, and provides small, short-term loans to people without previous access to credit. Many other groups took part in an innovative session called "Exchanges with the Grassroots," organized by students from the Development Studies Program at American University. One panel brought participants face to face with representatives from the Highlander Research and Education Center to discuss their work in education and training in Appalachia. Other panels examined development education activities in the United States and followed the progress of a Bolivian cacao federation funded by the Inter-American Foundation.

A special issue of the SID newsletter will include a summary of the conference, and can be obtained from SID, 1401 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20005.

—Anna M. DeNicolo



A Dahka, Bangladesh, widow receives a loan for a milk cow from the Grameen Bank. This innovative banking institution, which is 75 percent owned by its borrowers, has been hailed as a model for providing credit to the poor.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TROPICAL FORESTS



Models of Land Use and Management from Latin America

JASON W. CLAY

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TROPICAL FORESTS: MODELS OF LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT FROM LATIN AMERICA, by Jason W. Clay. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cultural Survival Report No. 27, 1988.

Dominique Irvine

This book argues that indigenous people should be taken seriously in the formation of new land-use strategies for tropical forests in Latin America, not only in terms of knowledge about specific ecosystems but as partners in the design of development projects. In making that argument, the author echoes the warnings of other experts that the pillaging of tropical forests for short-term gain is a short-sighted strategy. Searching for a "quick fix" to their overwhelming financial and social problems, Latin American governments are in danger of mortgaging the future of their countries, a future that depends on finding

new solutions for the sustainable use of forests.

Jason Clay, director of research for Cultural Survival, a private organization that supports activities on behalf of indigenous people and ethnic minorities worldwide, suggests that indigenous resource management can provide a basis for developing appropriate land-use strategies for the humid tropics. However, he goes beyond purely technological solutions to highlight the importance of understanding the problem within its political and social context. He emphasizes that indigenous peoples must maintain control of their resources in order to encourage conservation and sustainable land-use strategies.

According to Clay, indigenous people, with centuries of experience living in tropical forests, provide the best source of information on which to build new alternatives for development, both for themselves and for colonists unfamiliar with wilderness ecosystems. However, this message is not proclaimed with unbridled enthusiasm. First, Clay warns that the direct transfer of indigenous resource management systems to colonists may not be possible because that knowledge is embedded in larger cultural and social systems. Second, he warns that we should not romanticize the relationship between indigenous people and their environment. Indians are not conservationists in the Western sense; we need to look at the conditions under which Indians will and will not conserve their resources. Indigenous autonomy and control are important parts of this process. Finally, he cautions researchers to pay more attention to their own methodologies. The need to show responsibility to indigenous peoples may well require a reformulation of the way research normally has been conducted. Researchers should not only include indigenous people as partners in research: They must also

understand and address the need for land-titling as a first step in developing alternative strategies.

The book is divided into two major parts. The first section reviews the major strategies of resource use employed by indigenous people in the neotropics, and provides case studies of the modifications that indigenous peoples are making to increase their cash income while maintaining their resource base. The author suggests research priorities for using traditional knowledge to develop appropriate management models for both indigenous and colonist populations.

Despite his emphasis on using indigenous models to reshape our thinking about tropical forest management, Clay uses the standard classification of indigenous land use—gathering, hunting, fishing, and swidden and permanent agriculture—to shape his argument. This device obscures the impact that indigenous people have as forest managers, a thread that runs through his discussion but is not highlighted. Gathering, hunting, and agriculture, for example, are not isolated strategies but are intrinsically linked as different stages and intensities of an overall system of land management. Emerging research, indeed, has been changing our vision of the active role that indigenous people play in managing their resources. These ideas are scattered throughout this section of the book, and then discussed again in a review of the indigenous use of "natural and modified resource units." The larger process of management that unites different parts of the forest ecosystem with different subsistence activities remains, however, unstressed.

The second part of the book uses three case studies to argue that indigenous people should control their own resources and the process of adapting traditional management systems to cash economies. The

case studies of the Kuna in Panama, and the Awa on the border of Ecuador and Colombia, underline the importance of indigenous people controlling their own territories in order to preserve their resource bases. The case of CRIC, the Cauca indigenous council in Colombia, highlights the need for indigenous control of development projects in defining goals and providing training so that projects are sustainable. These examples argue that guaranteeing indigenous land rights encourages conservation of tropical forests. Given the dismal record of other approaches, this argument deserves to be taken seriously.

DOMINIQUE IRVINE holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from Stanford University as well as a master's degree in forestry and environmental studies from Yale University. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and is doing fieldwork on resource management among the lowland Indians of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA,

by H. Jeffrey Leonard.
New Brunswick, New Jersey:
Transaction Books, 1987.

Mac Chapin

For those who believe that the solution to Central America's problems can be found by tinkering with political systems, or simply by upping the cash ante on development assistance, *Natural Resources and Economic Development in Central America* by H. Jeffrey Leonard will come as a shock, and not a pleasant one. Leonard's book takes the reader below surface events to probe the bedrock underlying the region's political and economic unrest. His

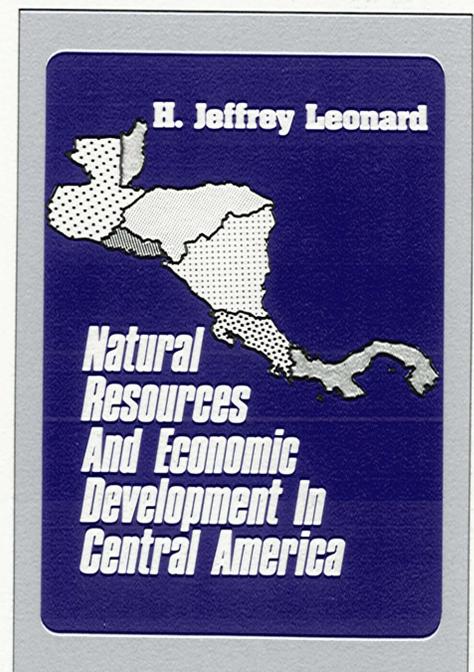
carefully measured assessment of Central America's rapidly deteriorating natural resource base, set within the context of economic "development," makes clear the damage already done and emphasizes the urgency of finding appropriate solutions.

The book provides the first analytical treatment of Central America as a geographical, social, and economic unit, assembling related information on the present condition of natural resources, agricultural activity, health, nutrition, and other sectors. While the tremendous diversity of the region can make generalizations seem forced, Leonard's strategy allows him to organize information around themes (land-use patterns, fisheries development, soil erosion, pesticide use, and so on) that make it possible to highlight trends, endemic problems, and significant relationships. The masses of statistical data tying these themes together are supplemented at intervals by extremely useful (especially for the nonspecialist) expository discussions of such topics as the dynamics and implications of watershed deterioration, the effects of deforestation on migratory species, and the patterns and consequences of colonization in frontier areas. Copious, well-organized citations in the text will lead interested readers to more specialized works on the numerous themes summarized.

One of the the book's most important contributions is to show through extensive documentation the inextricable link between natural resource management and productivity. In light of the evidence presented here, our failure to understand this link, which has persisted through a veritable explosion of misdirected development schemes over the last 30 years, is both tragic and baffling. "More than anything else," writes Leonard, "...the destruction of key renewable resources throughout Central America is in-

dicative of the fact that much of the so-called development that has occurred in recent decades has been based upon highly inefficient and wasteful exploitation of these resources rather than on increases in economic productivity."

Natural Resources and Economic Development in Central America was intended to be a first step toward finding a better path. It was written with high-level policymakers in mind, and attempts to stimulate discussion about existing programs in order to influence future activities promoted and financed by organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the World Bank. Leonard's USAID-funded study was conducted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and is based, in part, on USAID's Country Environmental Profiles for the seven Central American nations. In this context, it has already had some success. But perhaps even more importantly, the book—which has



Resources

been translated into Spanish—has begun to find an audience among policymakers in several countries of the region. All of this constitutes a constructive beginning.

At the same time, I strongly believe that this volume should be required reading for all development practitioners working in Central America, including representatives of nongovernmental organizations at the community level. By providing an eagle's view of the region as a whole, Leonard displays the broad context in which all of us must operate. The composite picture of rapidly declining resources, misdirected "assistance," self-destructive policies, and general structural incompetence that emerges as the reader makes his way through the dense thickets of statistical information and exposition is, quite frankly, unrelentingly grim, and even depressing. Unfortunately, it also happens to be the reality we must work to change. Before we sally forth with our little swords to do battle, we might be well advised to take stock of the nature of the enemy so that we do not unwittingly assist an opponent that is not only formidable but already running wild.

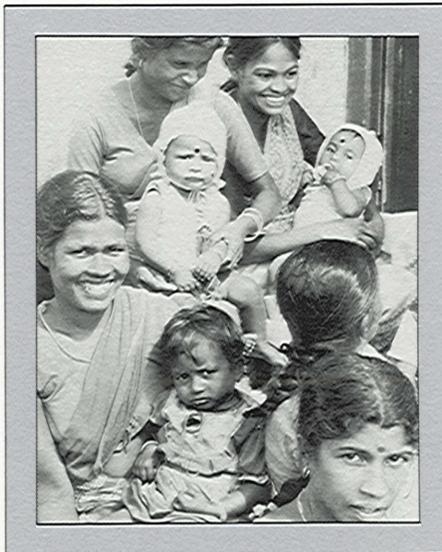
MAC CHAPIN, who holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Arizona, is a staff member of Cultural Survival, a group based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that works with indigenous peoples. The paperback edition of *Natural Resources and Economic Development in Central America* is available for \$20.00 per copy through IIED, 1717 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Hardback copies should be ordered directly from Transaction Books. The Spanish edition, titled *Recursos Naturales y Desarrollo Económico en América Central*, is available from the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), Torrialba, Costa Rica.

Fifteen years after the Percy Amendment legislated that particular attention be given to integrating women into development, U.S. Representatives Pat Schroeder and Mickey Leland have recently written a resolution to expand the original amendment. Among other things, their legislation would require the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to incorporate women into all aspects of development projects—from planning to evaluation.

This call for renewed emphasis on women's issues does not deny the achievement gained through past efforts such as the U.N. Decade for Women, but rather points out the enormity of what remains to be accomplished. The brief survey that follows examines some of the resource centers that have emerged to enhance the economic and social position of women in Latin America.

The World Bank established an Advisor on Women In Development in 1977. A decade later, it instituted a full-fledged Women in Development Division (WID).

WID's six-person staff is attempt-



From *Preventing the Tragedy of Maternal Deaths*.

ing to draw up "Country Action Plans" to examine multisectoral approaches for improving the opportunities of women in selected countries, including Bolivia. This effort combines policy formulation with applied research to provide a conceptual framework on women's development issues. By devising country action plans and program initiatives on agricultural planning services at the local level, WID hopes to develop models for Bank-wide efforts to assist women in agriculture, industry, education, family planning, health, and nutrition.

One new program that has emerged is the World Bank Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI), begun in February 1988. The SMI is a two-pronged effort to improve health-care available to mothers in developing countries. It promotes a strong primary care system of community-based health and family-planning services, backed up by clinics and an emergency transport service for women with medical complications during pregnancy or delivery.

Written resources currently available from WID include: "Preventing the Tragedy of Maternal Deaths: A Report on the International Safe Motherhood Conference," "The Safe Motherhood Initiative: An Address by Barber Conable, President of the World Bank," "Women in Bolivia: An Annotated Bibliography," and "The Safe Motherhood Initiative: Proposals for Action."

For further information write: Women in Development Division, World Bank, 1818 H Street, NW, Room 59-131, Washington, D.C. 20433.

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is an 11-year-old, private, nonprofit, Washington, D.C.-based organization devoted to improving the economic status of women in developing

countries. To achieve that goal, the ICRW provides technical assistance to national and international development agencies and nongovernmental organizations, conducts policy research and public education, and sponsors a visiting fellowship program for Third World professionals and researchers.

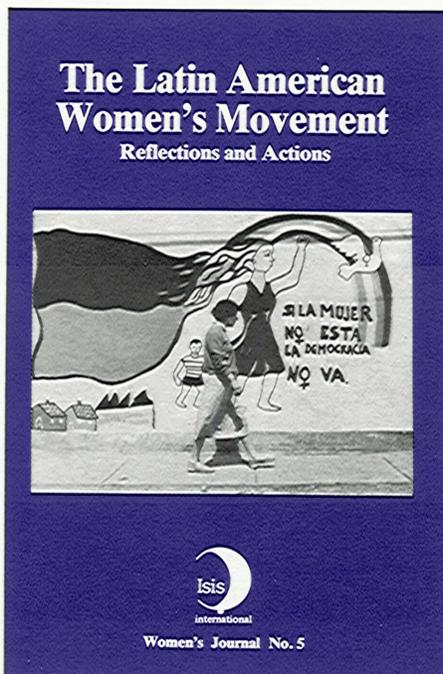
Staffed primarily by women economists, the ICRW helps with the identification, monitoring, and evaluation of urban and rural projects that focus on a variety of areas, including small enterprise development, vocational training, and health and nutritional services. It has advised USAID missions in Costa Rica and Ecuador, among other countries, on how to incorporate women into their five-year development plans.

Research activities have included both micro- and macro-level studies. "Women's Work and Child Welfare," for instance, is a program that focuses on learning how poor women balance their responsibilities as mothers and as producers of income, and how these dual roles affect the well-being of children. A recent joint research project with the Overseas Development Council examined how the debt crisis affects women's work patterns and income-earning opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean so that policymakers can maximize women's survival strategies.

During the last decade, the ICRW has published more than 50 reports, monographs, and papers on a range of topics affecting women, including access to primary and secondary education, and migration patterns in the Third World. Most publications are available in English and Spanish. Currently in production is the bilingual "Integrating Women into Development Programs: A Guide for Implementation for Latin America and the Caribbean."

For further information contact: International Center for Research on

Women, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 501, Washington, D.C. 20036.



Isis International was created in 1974 by women development practitioners at the grassroots and intermediate levels to document attempts by women's organizations to overcome long-standing social and cultural inequalities and patterns of discrimination in the Third World. Isis's activities and programs rely on the direct participation of local affiliates, forming an ad hoc global network that is coordinated by international teams with offices in Italy and Chile.

The backbone of the Isis communication network has been an information and resource bulletin first published in English in 1976, and then Spanish beginning in 1979. In 1984, this bulletin became the *Isis International Women's Journal*, a biannual book series. Responsibility for publication is rotated among selected Third World women's

groups. Each issue of the *Journal*, written in a lively style, covers a wide range of themes and grassroots experiences. The rotation strategy is designed to give women the opportunity to speak for themselves while strengthening networking by sharing firsthand knowledge from different parts of the globe. *Women in Action*, a quarterly supplement to the *Journal* published in English and Spanish, provides an up-to-date overview of what is happening in the women's movement around the world. The Isis office in Santiago—which also coordinates the Latin American and Caribbean Women and Health Network that was created in 1984—publishes a bi-monthly bulletin, in Spanish and English, with information on health groups and resources.

Recently Isis has begun to explore computer information and audio-visual technology. In 1986—with the contribution of women from all over the globe—the group published *Powerful Images: A Women's Guide to Audio-Visual Resources*, which lists over 600 audio-visual items and is available in both Spanish and English.

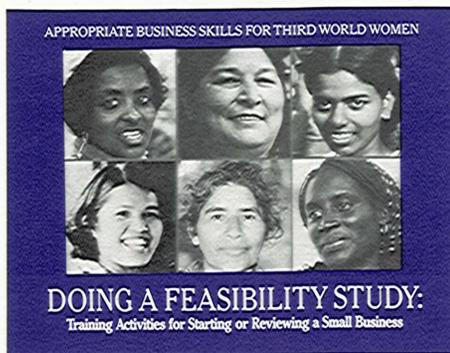
Further information on printed and audio-visual material produced by Isis International can be obtained from the Isis offices: Via San Saba 5, 00153 Rome, Italy, and Casilla 2967, Correo Central, Santiago, Chile.

WIRE, a small, nonprofit women's publishing collective, has been reprinting and distributing analytical monographs and booklets since 1979 on the problems and achievements of women in the Third World. The majority of WIRE's publications are in English, but many are also available in Spanish, and occasionally in French. Priority is given to publications generated by women from Third World countries.

To request a catalogue of publica-

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tions, write: Women's International Resource Exchange Service, Inc., 475 Riverside Drive, Room 570, New York, New York 10115.



OEF International is a private, nonprofit, U.S.-based development institution devoted to creating economic opportunities for low-income women through training and technical assistance programs in more than 70 countries.

The OEF recently issued a three-part series of publications—"Appropriate Business Skills for Third World Women"—for trainers, extensionists, and programmers assisting women to plan, finance, manage, and promote a variety of small businesses. The three technical training manuals are based on a participatory approach to education developed by the OEF.

Additional OEF publications include *Women Working Together for Personal, Economic and Community Development*, and *Navamaga: Training Activities for Group Building, Health and Income Generation*. These manuals are adaptable for use by men and women, can be used in an urban or rural setting, and are accessible to literate and illiterate audiences.

For more information contact: OEF International, 1815 H Street, NW, 11th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006.

—Barbara Annis and
María Adela Shearer

Mac Chapin's article "The Seduction of Models," which appeared in Vol. 12, No. 1, provoked more letters from readers than any other article published during the Journal's 11-year history. Although most of the letters were too long to print in their entirety, the excerpts that follow synthesize the points of view—some positive, some negative—that were expressed.

I enjoyed Mac Chapin's very forthright article. My only concern was the editorializing in the subtitle. The question asked—"Can an agricultural technology devised by the Aztecs rescue today's small farmers from the excesses of the Green Revolution?"—might more accurately have read, "Can agronomy protect village people against the romantic ideology of the agroecologists?" Certainly no self-respecting agronomist would promote the transfer of technology to farmers without adequate testing under both experimental and field conditions.

Vernon W. Ruttan
Department of Agriculture and
Applied Economics
University of Minnesota

I would like to comment on Mac Chapin's article. My points are based on years of experience in research on Pre-Hispanic wetland agriculture in lowland Mesoamerica, as well as a long association with INIREB, the research institute involved in the experimental transfer of the highland chinampa system to the lowlands.

The basic criticism in the article is entirely apt. The chinampa model, after years of promotion in journals and through word of mouth, has indeed managed to break free of the tangible world. . . . Beyond that, however, it seems to me that it is the appropriateness of the specific model of wetland agriculture actually purveyed from highlands to

lowlands that should be questioned rather than the wisdom of reintroducing traditional systems per se.

It should be apparent by now that the chinampa represents a relatively advanced form of wetland agriculture, particularly in its control of water levels to allow year-round cultivation. The remains of Pre-Hispanic agriculture that litter wetlands on the western and eastern flanks of the Yucatán Peninsula, in the lowlands of northern and central Veracruz, and in various other locations seem to represent a more rudimentary system . . . [in which] evidence of water level control is mostly lacking and the planting platforms were probably flooded for a part of each year.

. . . Rather than installing the full-blown system all at once, it might have been more appropriate and manageable to introduce a more rudimentary model. Fairly simple modifications of wetland margins by downslope canalization would accelerate drainage during the onset of the dry season but allow access to irrigation water later. Seasonal flooding could be accepted as a kind of fallow that would also aid pest control and enrich the soil through siltation. This could be elaborated eventually—extending the canal network downslope toward the center of the wetland, building dams to control the water level of a given basin, and adding platforms—to approximate what might be envisaged as the original developmental sequence of the [Pre-Hispanic] system.

Aside from all this, there certainly are problems of context. . . . There is, for instance, a fundamental problem with respect to [land] tenure. Most of the lowland Mesoamerican wetlands where the remains of the ancient system may be found and where one might expect to reintroduce the system are now in the hands of private owners bent on ranching. The communities of small

holders who would conceivably benefit most from the reintroduction do not usually have access to wetlands.

The whole prospect of the reactivation of ancient systems is, indeed, more than a little romantic, but it is not to be dismissed out of hand. Initial failures are to be expected; the tragedy comes when they cannot be followed up with elaborations and experiments. Ancient alternatives remain promising for the improvement of subsistence among marginalized rural people in the developing world. The environmental, social, and economic problems arising from the most seductive and pervasive model of all—that of commercial, mechanized agriculture—demand that attempts at reactivation should be continued.

Alfred H. Siemans
Department of Geology
University of British Columbia

The article on chinampas left me thinking a lot about the production projects (agricultural and other) that Amigos de Sian Ka'an hopes to carry out with Maya *ejidos*. The anthropologist who is helping us to design the projects has quite a challenge before her. We do not want to go the way of so many others who, in their attempts to impose a preconceived theoretical system, forget that the needs to be met are those of the people and not the scientists. In the case at hand, we must cope with the rapid disintegration of Mayan traditions as a result of the accelerated development of tourism and its socioeconomic consequences. It is interesting to note that the ultimate success of the Chontales lies in the fact that their project enabled them to earn money in Villahermosa while at the same time strengthening their practice of growing subsistence crops, thus helping them to become more attached to their land. This "smooth"

integration may also be suited to the Maya area, but I don't want to preconceive solutions.

Juan E. Bezaury
Executive Director
Amigos de Sian Ka'an
Cancún, Mexico

... The agricultural projects discussed [in Mac Chapin's article] made numerous technical blunders that were ultimately rectified by INIREB and others. The point is, however, that on a technical basis alone raised fields can be used throughout much of the wetlands in question. The failures noted by Chapin had much more to do with the poor socioeconomic planning that accompanied the projects. Identification of such problems was a bone of contention at a 1979 conference in Villahermosa that focused on the Chontal project. Several of us argued at that time that the economic planners should either confer with the farmers or leave them alone. Transportation, crop insurance, and market security were only a few of the issues that were not adequately addressed in the initial stages of that project, but the critical point is that these issues were the sources of failure, not the technology.

Chapin should extend his analysis elsewhere. Recently, more than 500 families have begun to resurrect relic raised fields on the seasonally inundated peripheries of Lake Titicaca in Peru, apparently with considerable success.

B. L. Turner II, Director
Graduate School of Geography
Clark University
Worcester, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: The IAF recently awarded a grant to the agricultural college of the Universidad Católica Boliviana to conduct research on the reintroduction of raised-field agriculture in

communities near the Bolivian shores of Lake Titicaca.

... Reading [Mac Chapin's article] left me with a sick feeling of frustration and déjà vu. What possessed the project managers to dredge up swamp muck and clay, inverting them in the construction of raised ridges?

What makes this personally sad is that I published in a policy science journal in 1951 an analysis of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs' efforts to transfer a floodwater impounding irrigation technology to the Papago Indian Reservation back in the 1930s, when precisely this error was committed with bulldozers. The operators scraped the topsoil off the enclosed basin first to heap up impounding dikes, then scraped off more impervious clay to raise the dikes over the topsoil—leaving farmers to raise crops on deep clay.

... In a 1952 casebook published by the Russell Sage Foundation, my chapter about forage production efforts on the Papago Reservation in the 1940s [emphasized] that the expensive diking system finally worked because outside engineers listened to Native American residents explain flooding patterns that would determine whether specific dikes succeeded or failed. The message that projects succeed to the degree that the people concerned are involved in the planning and execution has been published repeatedly since that time. What have economists been studying? Clearly, not the correct lessons!

Henry F. Dobyns
Edmond, Oklahoma

The editors of *Grassroots Development* invite readers to make substantive comments on the contents of the Journal. Letters, which may be edited for length and clarity, should be sent to: *Grassroots Development*, Inter-American Foundation, 1515 Wilson Blvd., Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.

Postscript

While the IAF, like many development organizations, has focused on the urban sector in recent years, the Foundation continues to allocate the largest share of its funding to agricultural and rural development projects.

One reason is the need to capitalize local producer associations and related community development programs as countries devote increasing levels of their budgets to industrial and urban sectors. Another factor, according to Stephen Vetter, IAF Vice President for Programs, is that "small communities have a tradition of organizing for their own survival that makes it easier for the IAF to reach them."

Indeed, the need for such support grows daily as modernization puts new pressures on the countryside. Mechanized farming, coupled with the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, now threatens the health and economic well-being of peasant farmers throughout the hemisphere.

This issue of *Grassroots Development* takes a close look at how people in one region—the Southern Cone—are attempting to deal with

these pressures. Although it is more commonly associated with Central America or the Andean region, rural poverty exists within Southern Cone countries that mocks per capita income figures. Diverse social, economic, and political conditions prevailing throughout the region have led to a variety of innovative approaches to rural development that merit dissemination.

Direct marketing, for example, is one alternative to dependency on the middlemen who purvey credit and buy a farmer's crops. As David Bray and Dionisio Borda describe in their article, "Internalizing the Crisis of Cotton" (p. 16), a group of small farmers in Paraguay has defied established agricultural production and marketing practices to turn a profit, albeit small, on subsistence crops. These modest gains are enough for now to keep the farmers on their land—and families intact.

In Chile's Cachapoal Valley, small farmers who have modernized sufficiently to compete in national markets now must combat another problem: the danger to their health and their environment caused by

ever increasing use of highly toxic pesticides. As Patrick Breslin concludes in his timely article, "The Valley Without Birds" (p. 24), each step in the development process brings with it new problems and challenges.

For many of the rural poor, the greatest challenge facing them is how to maintain their cultural identity and traditional values as the twentieth century is forced upon them. Noted Chilean author Ariel Dorfman visited one community in northern Argentina to see how a group of Mataco Indians is making the transition from hunter-gatherers to settled farmers. His haunting report, "Into Another Jungle" (p. 2), raises perhaps as many questions as it answers.

The topics covered in this issue of *Grassroots Development* are central to the IAF's support for rural development. We hope you will find the articles useful and informative in your own work as well.

Kathryn Shaw

grassroots development video series

1 THE WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTION

COLLECTIVE OF JAMAICA (Running time 12:45 min.)

A fast paced, upbeat, motivational story about 10 unemployed young black women, selected from the ghettos of Kingston and trained in the construction trade skills. They are currently operating their own construction and carpentry business and working on commercial construction sites.

Format requested: NTSC Secam PAL
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2 A COOPERATIVE WITHOUT BORDERS: THE FIRST STEP

(Cooperativa Sin Fronteras: El Primer Paso)

(Running time 21 min.)

A *Cooperative Without Borders: The First Step* depicts the Mexican migrant workers' struggle for survival and new hope for the future. The cooperative's peasant members are working with U.S. citrus growers and funding organizations to improve economic conditions in rural Mexico as an alternative to migration.

Format requested: NTSC Secam PAL
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3 ALPACAS: AN ANDEAN GAMBLE (Running time 27:30 min.)

The people of Aquia, in north central Peru, bet on their future by repopulating their highlands with alpacas. The alpacas' 1000-mile trek from southern Peru to Aquia is just the beginning of the risks and challenges that follow. (Also available in 16mm.)

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IAF Fellowships

The Foundation has created three fellowship programs to support Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. scholars researching development activities among the poor. Two of these programs support field research in Latin America and the Caribbean at the master's and doctoral levels; the third brings Latin American and Caribbean scholars and practitioners to the United States for advanced training.

Fellowship topics of primary interest are: 1) the nature of effective grassroots organizations among the poor; 2) the nature of effective intermediary or service organizations; and 3) systematic appraisals of local development activities such as studies of development programs and projects designed to reach the poorest populations, including small businesses in the informal sector, female-headed households, isolated indigenous populations, and artisanal fishermen.

Applications and inquiries should be directed to:

Fellowship Office
Inter-American Foundation
1515 Wilson Boulevard
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209
(703) 841-3864

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