

C o n c l u s i o n

The basic problem for the Guaraní of the Chaco has been to break free of domination by the patrones, thus regaining control over land, recovering their community self-control, and preserving their traditional culture. The concerns of the Guaraní of O'Connor province and their daily struggle for existence and for independence from the patrones may seem entirely localized. Yet, their voices, like those of the rubber tappers, speak to us of the profound ways in which they have been affected by forces that have their origins in national and international developments. While the impact of globalization and development on the rubber tappers has taken the form of a direct, violent conflict, that on the Guaraní has involved since the 1950s a more indirect, low-intensity erosion of their culture. At the same time, the Guaraní serve as a positive example of how a defeated, poverty-stricken people can fight back, how they can rekindle hope, revive agency, restore traditional institutions, create a sense of solidarity, and work with, but not surrender to, outside forces.

For both the rubber tappers and the Guaraní, the struggle is about land, dignity, and power. Marcia Stephenson, in *Gender and Modernity in Andean Bolivia*, speaks of the need to develop "AlterNative Institutions," which incorporate the vision and values of the marginalized majorities.¹ Dignity has meant pride in being Guaraní as well as refusal to serve as a wage slave to the patrones. Guaraní leader Chumiray, for example, has consistently stressed this theme in numerous speeches on *territorio y dignidad* [territory and dignity].²

The struggles of traditional groups are also about opposing views of land use. For the tappers and the Guaraní alike, the important goal is to remain where they are and work the land, not to own it or to get rich from it. Their respect for nature and their sense of connectedness to it dictate a different land use ethic than that of the patrones, who are the local face of capitalist entrepreneurship.

Certainly, the tappers and the Guaraní are each locked in a protracted struggle for economic survival. The tappers have adapted very quickly to new economic arrangements, such as diversifying production and forming cooperatives, and they have benefitted from the assistance of national and international environmental and agricultural NGOs. Further, under the leadership of Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes, they have created a strong union that has defended their human