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**Communication processes in a development project: The
Yacyretá hydroelectric dam Misiones, Argentina**

Ferradás, Carmen Alicia, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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COMMUNICATION PROCESSES IN A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT:

THE YACYRETA HYDROELECTRIC DAM.

MISIONES, ARGENTINA

by

CARMEN ALICIA FERRADAS

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, The City University of New York.**

1990

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

COMMUNICATION PROCESSES IN A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
THE YACYRETA HYDROELECTRIC DAM
MISSIONES, ARGENTINA

by

Carmen Alicia Ferradás

Adviser: Professor June Nash

This study examines processes of communication and miscommunication between and within the staff of a relocation agency and a displaced population. It analyzes a case study: the resettlement process of 20,000 people in the city of Posadas, Argentina who are being moved because of the construction of the Yacyretá hydroelectric dam.

Two dominant views on how to rationally achieve development goals -the "neopopulist and the authoritarian models of social intervention" are challenged. An alternative systemic approach is proposed to view

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development projects which may provide insight for projects in which we participate as development anthropologists. Neither the population to be relocated nor the relocation agency are seen as autonomous units: they comprise the same communication system. the system is regarded as a dynamic unit which simultaneously develops self reproducing mechanisms and reveals regularities through time. Those features generally seen as disruptive, irrational, and external are considered constitutive elements to the system. It is in this sense, that the analysis of the historical and political dimension is incorporated.

This study is neither an exclusive analysis of agency - those individuals who rationally make options to achieve goals-, nor of structure, the rational organization of means to ends which responds to its own laws irrespective of the will of individuals. On the contrary, it tries to break with the dichotomic "either/or" alternative and attempts to bring to the fore, the tensions between and within each of them. It also considers the larger context in which the observed practices are inscribed.

One major purpose of this study is to critically examine the role of social scientists in development. another major concern is to describe the dynamic role played by actors who are traditionally regarded as mere passive recipients of messages. Multiple practices and meanings are regarded as both the products of a process of negotiation,

signification and resignification among the various participants. The chapters of this dissertation discuss: 1) how the process unfolds in time and space, 2) the role played by the project generated crisis, 3) the links between the process of positioning and communication practices, and 4) the communication practices themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the product of intense and stimulating academic work, and also of solidarity and friendship. Academically, I am indebted to two major institutions. First, to the Universidad Nacional de Misiones where I work as a full-time professor, and second, to the Graduate School and University Center at the City University of New York where I took my graduate courses.

The former Rector of the UNaM, Engineer Andrés Linares and the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, René Nicoletti, encouraged me to pursue graduate studies and helped me in various ways while I was applying to Graduate Schools. Present authorities, Rector Roberto Safrán, Vice-rector Dionisio Baranger and the Dean of my school, were always willing to approve my requests for a leave of absence to come to New York to take my graduate courses and to write up my dissertation. It was also through their generosity that I could get student assistants and appropriate working conditions to finish the last stages of my thesis.

At the Department of Anthropology, I profited from theoretical discussions with my friends Lila Sintés, Enrique Martínez and Fernando Jaume. Alina Baéz de Bistoletti, the

Secretary of Research at UNaM, proved to be an efficient and enthusiastic mediator with the Argentine funding agencies. I am indebted to her for her dedication and support.

Licenciado Carlos González, the Director of the Institute of Research at my university, greatly contributed to this work. As a director, he offered me all the human and material resources at his disposal. As a friend and as a colleague, he discussed my work and made methodological and theoretical suggestions. Fulvia and Fernanda, the computer consultants at the Institute of Research helped me solve various editing problems, and Engineer Alfredo Yaquinandi spent hours designing my tables and the first pages of this dissertation. Sonia Hucowski, an anthropology student made all the maps included on this study.

Two anthropology students, Nancy Albohaires and Gustavo (Café) Azar were my assistants on the first stages of my field work (1987). I profited from their observations in the field and from suggestions they made throughout the study. Susana Moniec, a student in social work, was my assistant during 1988 and 1989. She contributed with field observations, data analysis and helped me with the tedious proof reading process.

I am specially indebted to Dr. Leopoldo Bartolomé. As the major specialist in hydroelectric projects in Argentina, and as an anthropologist working at Yacyretá, he encouraged me to study the Relocation Process because he maintained

that the perspective of an external observer was crucial to get a better understanding of development projects. He shared his data and his publications which were a source of inspiration for my own work. As a scholar, he took interest in my work and pushed me to think independently. He and his wife Graciela, also offered me their friendship and the warmth of their home at critical moments.

The Graduate School and University Center at the City University of New York was a stimulating academic environment, where I learnt scholarly discipline and developed a strong theoretical background. My advisor, Dr. June Nash has guided my work ever since I started the Graduate Program. Not only did she show interest in my theoretical queries, but she also offered me friendship and advice during my studies. She taught me a lot about the craft of anthropology and helped me improve my writing skills in the English language.

Dr. Eric Wolf and Dr. Vincent Crapanzano, the two other members of my dissertation committee also contributed to this thesis in various ways. With the two I matured intellectually and was encouraged to develop my own ideas. I am grateful to them for everything they taught me.

Other professors at CUNY helped me and discussed my academic work while I was taking my courses. Dr. Sydel Silverman, Dr. Jane Schneider, Dr. Daniel Gross, and Dr. Delmos Jones followed my progress and took interest in my

studies. Dr. Talal Asad contributed to this dissertation through reading the first drafts and discussing chapter contents.

Dr. Elizabeth Colson, a leading specialist on my dissertation topic -the social impact of hydroelectric projects- was the external reader of my final draft. I am very thankful to her for reading my manuscript and for making suggestions to improve my arguments.

Various institutions gave me financial support to do this study. The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research granted me a Developing countries Fellowship to pursue graduate studies at CUNY, do my field work, and write my dissertation. The Organization of American States granted me a fellowship during the first years of my studies. The Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas gave me an award to finish writing my dissertation and another one to cover some of my field work expenses.

I cannot find an appropriate way of expressing my gratitude to all my friends in Argentina and in the United States who helped during these years. I wrote this dissertation while Argentina, my home country, was suffering the worst hyperinflation of its history. As I was in part depending on my devalued salary from the Universidad Nacional de Misiones, I would have never finished writing had it not been for the invaluable help and moral support from faculty members and fellow students who encouraged me

to continue when I suddenly became a homeless myself in the city of New York. I specially want to thank Yvonne Lasalle, María José Triviño, Elizabeth Chin, and Joe Jiménez who came to my rescue at those critical moments.

My fellow students at CUNY, Bea Vidacs, Leyla Neyzi, Yvonne Lasalle, Carmen Medeiros, Patricia Tovar, Alfredo González, Lygia Simonian, Maureen O'Dougherty, Aisha Kahn, and Cristiana Bastos gave me support and friendship throughout my school years, took special interest on my research and discussed various aspects of this dissertation. Robin Sheriff maintained endless conversations on the progress of my work and helped me edit some of the chapters. Tom Burgess, who is also planning to study hydroelectric projects, maintained long talks about my research and suggested specialized readings. He read the first drafts of this dissertation, and while I was in Argentina kept in contact with my advisors and solved many problems regarding the last stages of my thesis. Susan Hamilton, a graduate student from Syracuse University, also read the drafts of my dissertation and helped me to edit and proof read two of my chapters.

Esther Hermitte, Judith Herbstein and Liliana Golding, three Argentine friends who graduated as anthropologists in the United States, shared their experience with me, encouraged me to apply to a doctoral program, and gave me important advice on how to organize my studies.

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, a friend and a fellow student at CUNY, shared the interest on the Yacyretá project. While at CUNY we exchanged our information on the project and discussed our proposals and theoretical orientations. While writing my dissertation I gathered with Christine Grabowski, John Burdick and Alessandro Scasselatti to discuss our theses. These encounters were very stimulating and clarifying and I believe all of us profited from them.

During my years in New York, Tom Mellers initiated me into the secrets of English writing, and also gave me his friendship, support and company while I was taking my graduate courses. My friend from Posadas, Yolanda Urquiza, spent many hours of her time solving my domestic and academic problems while I was away and was an intelligent and insightful interlocutor while I was doing my field work and writing my dissertation.

Above all, I am thankful to the Misioneros who helped me feel at home in the "land of the red soil." Undoubtedly, this work would have never been written without the cooperation of my informants from the neighborhoods to be flooded, the Yacyretá staff, and provincial and municipal functionaries. However, I cannot mention them by name because I want to preserve their anonymity. I had intentionally changed data that would have enabled readers to identify individual actors. I hope this work would contribute to a better understanding between participants in

this communication process. I also wish my observations would help to improve the situation of those who are waiting for relocation and of those who work at EBY.

My mother and my sister Silvia followed my work from argentina and shared my anxiety and my enthusiasm while I was there. My family in New York, my sister Susana, her husband Adolfo, and my nieces Valeria and Mariana, made me enjoy my stay in this city during the hard years of Graduate School. I specially want to thank and dedicate this study to Mariana, my nine year old niece who was the first one who volunteered to read my first chapter.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"The nature of the response of the relocated population will depend, to a large degree, upon the establishment of good mechanisms of communication and upon the periodic consultation of the affected population and their organizations (community-based groups, non-governmental associations, etc.) as well as upon the encouragement of participation to look for solutions and definitions of the complex problems that emerge from the planning and implementation of relocation"(Cernea 1989).

"Decision processes are... processes of eliminating other possibilities. They produce more 'nays' than 'yeas,' and the more rationally they proceed, the more extensively they test other possibilities, the greater becomes their rate of negation. To demand an intensive, engaged participation of all in them would be to make a principle of frustration. Anyone who understands democracy in this way has, in fact, to come to the conclusion that it is incompatible with rationality."(Luhman, quoted in Habermas 1975:133).¹

The statements quoted above represent two opposing views on how to "rationally" achieve development goals, both of which this study attempts to challenge. One perspective sees communication and participation as privileged vehicles to ensure development goals; the other looks at both as inherent sources of conflict. In other words, what some

¹ Habermas was involved in a heated debate with Luhman regarding communication, participation, and the functioning of modern complex systems. While Luhman maintained that complex systems should respond to their own logic, irrespective of individual actors, Habermas argued that we should recover and encourage the active involvement of all members of society. His ideas are summarized in his model of communicative action (see Habermas 1979).

planners see as a means, others see as an obstacle. I will try to show that both approaches are misleading because they oversimplify the functioning of development projects and rely on questionable assumptions about the nature of communication.

In these coming chapters I will explore how communication works in a particular development project, the relocation process generated because of the construction of the Yacyretá hydroelectric dam. I will try to demonstrate that ideals of participation and communication can never be fully achieved because no matter how good the intentions of planners are, communication exchanges in these kinds of undertakings always occur in asymmetrical power contexts. Participants do not have the same access to decision making, they do not hold positions of equivalent power and they also often belong to different cultural and historical traditions. All these aspects constitute constraining elements which are hard to overcome. On the other hand, to think that to achieve development goals we should do away with individual actors and solely rely on technocratic expertise as the only guarantor of a successful project would also be a mistake. Technocrats, like the professional staff of the relocation agency I will analyze, may often be exposed and conditioned by political forces which are at work throughout the totality of a process of change. It would be wrong to think that staff members operate in a

monolithic way and that they share the same goals regarding development. What the Yacyretá experience will show is that the bureaucratic agency set to deal with resettlement is far from resembling the bureaucratic type envisaged by Weber. On the contrary, the study on this agency may serve as a counterexample: most of the relations among members are personalized, recruitment of staff members is done on the basis of personal recommendations and/or political influence and very rarely are project policies oriented by technical knowledge.

Several chapters of this study describe processes of communication and miscommunication at work. I consider that the two are always present and constitute an integral part of development projects. To support my views on processes of communication and miscommunication in development projects empirically, I will analyze a case study: the resettlement process of the population affected by construction of the Yacyretá hydroelectric dam, a large scale project which Argentina and Paraguay are constructing on the Paraná river under a treaty signed in 1974.

My data were obtained through interviews and field observations of the process as it was occurring in the Argentine city of Posadas. I did not cover the Paraguayan city of Encarnación, whose population will also be uprooted with the filling of the reservoir. The research focused on the encounter between the relocation agency and the

residents of this city affected by the project. I looked at participants in this process -agency and population- as comprising a distinctive communication system, a unit in which members have differential access to power, channels of communication and decision making. The study may fall into the category in what some authors are now calling an anthropology of development.

Anthropologists and Development

As anthropologists, we can approach development in two ways. We can get involved in the design, assessment, implementation and/or evaluation of projects. In doing so, we are engaged in what is generally called development anthropology (see, for example, Partridge 1984; Cochrane 1971; Hoben 1982, 1984; Peattie 1981; Curtis 1985). Or we can observe development with the same methods and techniques our colleagues use to look at simple and complex societies. In that case we are doing an anthropology of development.² While the first approach is interested in the application of anthropological knowledge to planned change, the second consists of a study of what others do in development².

² Charsley(1982), for example, defines such an approach as an "anthropological study of development which is entirely separate from application and logically prior to it" (quoted in Grillo 1985:29). See also Scholte 1974; Bastide 1973.

² For a thorough comparison of the two approaches, see Grillo (1985). Larissa Lomnitz (1979) also provides an overview on how anthropologists relate to development in

The study of the Yacyretá hydroelectric project is an example of the second alternative, an anthropology of development. Various authors have proposed following this line of research. Roger Bastide (1973) is probably one of the first proponents of this perspective, later put into practice in studies such as Belshaw's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice: an Anthropology of Public Policy* (1976) and Robertson's *People and the State* (1984). In this study, I will pursue some lines of enquiry suggested for this orientation -namely, concentrating on the development project as "project ethnographics" (Rew 1985) and focusing on the development bureaucracy (Charsley 1982, Conlin 1985, Hinshaw 1980).

Considering that the Binational Yacyretá Entity hired social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, and social workers) to work in the relocation program, the study will also become a critique of social sciences as policy sciences. As such, it will call into question the basis of each discipline, goals, methods, techniques and theoretical frameworks³.

Anthropology and Hydroelectric Projects

Latin America.

³ Numerous works examine the role of anthropology in policy making. See, for example, Weaver(1985), Van Willigen(1984), Lasswell(1971), Hinshaw(1980), Chambers (1977), Cochrane (1980).

Although this research gives us insight into general problems of development, its specific focus is on relocation processes in hydroelectric projects. Our participation as anthropologists in such projects includes both of the alternatives stated above: we either observe and interpret development processes or we put our knowledge in use to achieve development goals. In general, most of the published works are analysis of the effects of resettlement on various peoples such as indigenous groups or peasants (see, for example, Fahim 1973, 1983; Wali 1982, 1989; Colson 1967, 1971; Scudder and Colson 1972, 1979; Salisbury 1986; Barabás and Bartolomé 1973; Gales 1988; Fernea and Kennedy 1966).

Few anthropologists, however, have been active participants in the relocation programs and even fewer have been involved in all phases of the project. The Yacyretá experience is unique in this respect. As noted above, anthropologists, sociologists and social workers took part in the design and implementation of the relocation process.

Most colleagues working in hydroelectric projects are hired as development anthropologists to undertake what is known as social impact assessment. This kind of study is done to assess the positive and negative effects of development projects on a given population.

Researchers involved in analysis of the impact of resource development complain that their studies are rarely considered by decision makers. Furthermore, they all agree

that development agencies regard the social aspects of projects as something marginal, as a residual category, only included among the costs of projects (Bartolomé 1983; Rofman 1987; Suárez, Franco and Cohen 1983).

When asked to report on development impacts, social analysts look at the development project as a homogenous unit which only involves technical aspects that affect a population, also seen as another autonomous unit. Researchers do not realize that the population is not only affected by the ongoing concrete, material planned process, but that it also suffers and responds to actions initiated by members of the development agency. Neither do they see that the project may be affected by the actions of the population.

For example, some anthropologists involved in assessing relocation projects, have used mechanistic models, such as Scudder's and Colson's multidimensional stress model, which characterizes the stages a given population goes through when affected by the construction of a hydroelectric dam (Scudder and Colson 1982). On following studies, the same authors have employed more dynamic models which consider tensions within systems and stress strategies and choices (Colson 1976; Scudder and Colson 1988. Cf. also Bartolomé 1983).⁴ Although many authors are starting to acknowledge

⁴ In their last book, Colson and Scudder say: "We think of societies as flexible organizations forming and reforming because they are composed of thinking men and women who are

the importance of the larger context and no longer see the systems in isolation, very few include an analysis of the broader socio-historical contexts in their studies (see, for example, Partridge 1985; Ribeiro 1985, 1988; Rofman 1984; Bartolomé 1983, 1988).

Recently, anthropologists specializing in the social aspects of dam projects, and of other development projects as well, have stressed the need for studying the planning agencies (Pitt 1976; Partridge 1984; Bartolomé 1983, 1988). So far, nobody has yet published a study on this topic. To undertake such a task would not, however, be a totally new field of anthropological enquiry. Our predecessors were already interested in analyzing complex organizations in industries and in public administration as early as the 1930s. As years passed, this line of inquiry was partially abandoned and became quite invisible for mainstream anthropologists. Academics generally tended to look contemptuously at those who continued to dedicate their efforts to the analysis and implementation of change in various types of organizations. However, although interest in these topics was never totally dismissed, specialists

bound neither by primordial institutions nor by primordial identities. They can change and become something else. Rules and acquired wisdom, the stuff of culture, are guides to action but do not dictate action. Instead, people make opportunistic choices which they then try to justify. Sometimes this involves the revision of very basic assumptions, but more commonly people appeal to situational factors that particularize the choice to the here and now (1988:2)."

from other disciplines, rather than anthropologists, made the major contributions to the understanding of bureaucracies.

Undoubtedly, Weber's (1968) work is the most influential in this field encompassing diverse approaches. His ideal type conceives of bureaucracies as organizations characterized by a high degree of specialization, impersonal relations among its members, recruitment of officials on the basis of technical knowledge and capabilities, a hierarchical structure of authority, and a differentiation between private wealth and official income. This system functions on the basis of rational rules oriented by technical knowledge, with the aim of achieving maximum efficiency.

Most of the succeeding studies have attempted to challenge Weber's perspective in some way or another. The majority of Weber's critics failed to see that his aim was not to describe a concrete, specific case but an ideal type. Empirical sociological studies from the 50's (such as Gouldner 1954, Blau 1973 [1955], and Selznick 1966 [1949]) analyzed bureaucracies as complex social systems and demonstrated the importance of looking at power dimensions. Such pioneering systematic observations in the field led to the consideration of an array of aspects: dynamism of organizations, conflict among interest groups, decision making processes, unintended consequences of actions, the

role of uncertainty. Although systemic orientations diverged and changed their emphasis as they were influenced by findings in other fields of knowledge such as cybernetics in the 60's and 70's, they continued to neglect the role played by the contexts in which the organizations evolved. Space and time, if ever considered, were included in the overall category of the environment, taken either as the source of "noise" or "disturbances" to the system or as something to which the "integrated whole" adapted. With the exception of the interactionist approaches, that emphasize the role of individuals in organizations, the majority of the studies solely concentrate on structures and do not look at the role of historical social actors.

Previous involvement in projects of development

My model of analysis stems from a critique of the perspectives represented in the quotes at the beginning of this chapter. My concern with these approaches derives from my previous personal involvement in development projects as an anthropologist both in those emphasizing participation, communication and planning from the bottom up, and in others that relied heavily on expert knowledge. Thus, my own past practice led me to reflect upon the theoretical assumptions underlying the "applied" actions of social scientists. I became interested in analyzing our role and the effect of our participation in projects of development. When I took

part in such projects, I was particularly intrigued with the observation that no matter what approach was employed, communication did not work as planners envisaged it: Different participants assigned different meanings to the same utterance; speakers presupposed a common background knowledge of the situation which did not always exist; people attributed certain messages to others who asserted they had never said such things. In sum, I was witnessing the complexities of communication at work which the models failed to acknowledge. Moreover, the romanticized participation of the people proved to be a hard task to achieve. Many community members were not willing to work collectively to achieve the goals they had themselves established. Chosen strategies of action could not be implemented, either because those involved lacked the material resources or because they met with opposition from other sectors of society. Political parties also generated pressures to stop the participatory projects which they saw as threatening their power base. I soon realized that neither communication nor participation could be regarded as neutral media. Both are inscribed in a context of asymmetrical power relations and both quite often, if not always, serve to reproduce the existing relations of domination or to generate new ones.

Aware of the shortcomings of either orientation, I developed a model that aims at overcoming some of the

observed limitations. I will examine both the problems specific to each approach and those shared by the two in order to show how my ideas originated. For analytical purposes, I have drawn upon the terms "neopopulist" and "authoritarian" to refer to these two models of social intervention.

Neopopulist and authoritarian models of social intervention

I will call a neopopulist model of social intervention in development projects any attempt to empower the "people" by promoting communication and participation in a restricted manner with the purpose of achieving predetermined goals. Such a model relies on theoretical assumptions that maintain that actors freely make rational choices. In a development project with this kind of model the role of social scientists would be that of mediator/facilitator who helps to achieve goals already established on the basis of engineering and economic needs. In other words, social scientists are expected to manipulate the population to ensure the successful achievement of somebody else's goals. Mediation, as Greenhouse (1985) noted, is central to the maintenance of social control. As it is always performed in a context where disputants -and the third party, the mediator- have conflicting interests and occupy different positions in the social structure, agreements are reached on the basis of persuasion and on the conviction that if

disputes are not settled, the partners to the dispute might encounter some sort of social censure and sanctions.

That communication and participation of the population must be ensured in order to have a successful relocation program, seems to be a widespread belief among social scientists working in development agencies. Akbar Ahmed and Scarlett Epstein (1984), for example, have asserted that efficacy of development projects is a function of communication among the different participants. Similarly, Bamberger (1986) stresses that beneficiary participation in project design and management contributes positively to cost recovery and sustainability of projects. The rhetoric of these planners masks what happens in these types of projects. First, people must become accomplices of something that is already decided upon from above. Second, such statements present a unidirectional reality, where the agency generating the situation remains unmentioned, and action must be encouraged only on one part of the relational set that is created once these projects are under way. Third, planners' ultimate concern is with reducing costs of the project and not with social issues, which are regarded as problems to be reckoned with.

An authoritarian model of social intervention, on the other hand, emphasizes expert knowledge in decision making and favors the autonomous functioning of planning bureaucracies, free from political constraints. Models of

this kind, either in their structural or evolutionary version, generally reify the functioning of systems as if they had an independent, orderly and rational dynamics. Instability and perturbations of the "normal and natural" state of the system are blamed on politics, which in the view of these theoreticians is the realm of the unpredictable and the irrational. In this position, there is no room for the subject, seen as the source of disorder and chaos.⁵

The neopopulist model minimizes the role of the development agency, responsible for setting the rules of the game, the policies, and goals for which consensus must be attained through the instrumentation of the social base. The other model highlights the importance of the planning bureaucracy and attempts to avoid inputs from the population.

Both prevailing approaches rely on assumptions that must be questioned:

- 1) They see certain actors as given and unproblematic. They concentrate on a particular kind of actors - be it the population or the organization- without analyzing the complex web/network of social relations characteristic of these units of projects.
- 2) They regard actions in development projects as the

⁵ For discussions on order and politics, see Lechner (1986), and Habermas (1975, 1979).

exercise of rationality, the fundamental expression of the modern, purposive, technical action.

3) They oversimplify the functioning of development projects assuming a homogeneity of motives and practices which does not occur in actuality.

4) Both the development project and its side effect, in this case, relocation, are presented as givens, something that is part of the natural order of things.

5) Technology is also seen as something predetermined, as a "force to which communities and beliefs are obliged to adapt"(Pfaffenberger 1988:236). But technology, as Marx noted, is a social product which reveals how men organize themselves to control nature and how they make sense of the relations thus resulting.⁶

However limited the first model may seem, it is rarely enforced by development agencies, and the desire to implement it does not go beyond the rhetoric of projects. I would argue that this is so because this perspective entails a politically subversive potential. Indeed, encouragement of collective discussion of the best way to achieve any development goal may easily lead to question about: 1) who made the decision in the first place and for what purpose, 2) who needs the innovation, and 3) who will benefit. The

⁶ Marx (1987:352) said:"Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them."

unravelling of some issues may lead to collective opposition to the change itself or to demands which the agency is not willing to meet.

On the few occasions that social scientists involved in planning promote communication and participation, they do so on a limited basis and sometimes with the concealed purpose of exerting social control over the population through coopting leadership, neutralizing trouble-makers, and controlling information. It must be stressed that these effects are not always intentionally pursued but they are a logical outcome of the practice of social scientists. The reason why this is so is partly a function of the professional training of the practitioners and of the asymmetrical relationship established between the agency and the people.

Unlike critics of authoritarian models of intervention, I would also argue that, far from threatening the efficiency of projects, tight controls of communication and participation which inevitably generate misunderstandings and communication distortions, may often facilitate the successful achievement of development goals. Furthermore, we cannot look at restrictions in communication and their consequences as aberrant phenomena, but rather as an integral, structurally determined part of projects.

I have already discussed some developmental alternatives that planners and theoreticians of planning

generally depict as efficient and/or rational. I should now examine the different meanings assigned to these key words in development projects.

Rationality and efficiency

The concepts of "efficiency" and "rationality" are generally used interchangeably. Neither is a neutral word nor do they have a univocal meaning. Speakers often employ them to refer to the least costly way of achieving goals. This meaning, with a clear economic overtone, is the most widely used in development projects. Thus, to find the most rational/effective solution is a question of technique: 1) to undertake a cost/benefit analysis in which every action is assessed in terms of its cash value and 2) once costs and benefits are ascertained, the task is to choose the best alternative to maximize outcomes. This represents an instrumental view of rationality which finds theoretical expression in the works of Weber: a mastery of the world in response to human interest, consisting of an adjustment of means to ends.

Another sense of the "rational," in use since the times of Enlightenment thinkers, sees in reason the means to depart from a world controlled by superstition and irrationality and to reach one governed by science and knowledge. It mainly refers to the way speaking subjects acquire and use knowledge in accordance with logically defined procedures.

This linear, evolutionary perspective views reason as the possibility of overcoming ideology. This is the type of rationality envisaged by Habermas, who poses the possibility of a communicative action to counterbalance the Weberian purposive, rational action. He defines it as the interaction of free actors mutually -intersubjectively- making validity claims to reach a common understanding of something in the objective world.⁷ Habermas' utopian model of communication derives from a critique of planning in the social welfare state in advanced capitalist societies and is concerned with recovering a moral, ethical dimension of human action.

At a practical level, these two ways of looking at rationality roughly correspond to the two models of social intervention stated earlier in this chapter. The neopopulist model presupposes rational actors making choices on the basis of intersubjectively agreed courses of action. The authoritarian model assumes there is one ideal, given "rational" order to which actions must conform.

Both senses of rationality share the notion that actions are predictable. These deterministic notions rooted in classical physics, are no longer sustained by

⁷ Habermas discusses this model at length in "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" (1979:I-68) and in Chapters I and III in the *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol.1 (pp.8-42, 273-337).

contemporary physicists.⁸ Paradoxically, many development planners (especially -but not exclusively- those with training in social sciences) adopt mechanistic rational models in an effort to please and be accepted by those holding more "scientific" forms of knowledge.

I contend that we should radically change our way of looking at the "systems rationality." Actors do not always make "rational choices" nor do systems always "naturally"-rationally- evolve into more complex levels of integration. It has been noted that people may choose alternatives that do not always contribute to their welfare. In addition, it is clear that what is in the interest of one human being is not necessarily in the interest of another. Many studies of bureaucracies discuss precisely this point. Gouldner, for example, demonstrated that some rules could be rational for managers but not for workers (1954:16). In any given system, there is always a dialectic between these two "rationalities." However, this is far from being the complete picture of how a system works. We must also include in our analysis those features generally regarded as disruptive, irrational and external. And we must look at them not as unintended and unexpected outcomes, but as

⁸ For discussions on these new trends in physics see: Ilya Prigogine(1980), *From Being to Becoming*; Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (1988) *Entre le Temps et l'Eternité*. For an attempt to incorporate these orientations to the analysis of social processes, see: Richard Adams (1988) *The Eighth Day*.

constitutive elements. It is in this sense, for example, that we should incorporate the analysis of the political dimension.

An Alternative Systemic Approach

The two models I have discussed represent alternative ways of social planning in development projects. They constitute the practical expression of theoretical approaches. However, social planners applying such models are seldom aware of the theoretical frameworks underlying their practice.

In this study, I follow an alternative systemic approach to view development projects, one which intends to overcome the limitations of the theoretical approaches guiding applied work. What I propose here is a way of looking at processes of development and thus involves doing an anthropology of development. My purpose is that through analyzing the planning process in this manner, I will be able to provide insight for future projects in which we may participate as development anthropologists.

The system under study

I see neither the population to be relocated nor the resettlement agency as autonomous units: they comprise the same communication system. Rather than looking at the system as fixed, static and bounded, as old system approaches did, I regard it as a dynamic unit, in which both the limits and

constitutive elements are in constant flow. I consider, for example, that at certain times, government agents or members of the civil society may become relevant elements of the systems, while they may not belong to it at other times. Consensus may never be the outcome; indeed it is the evolving conflict that makes for the dynamism of the system.

Nonetheless, I am aware that a concern with change and difference should not preclude the identification of temporal and spatial continuities and regularities. I believe that the system cannot not be understood unless we consider its intertwining with larger units. Moreover, I think that recovery of spatio-temporal dimensions as integral parts of systems is crucial to grasp their functioning. Systems do not display a fixed and permanent form through time; they change continuously and simultaneously, they develop self-reproducing mechanisms.

This study is neither an exclusive analysis of agency - those individuals who rationally make options to achieve goals-, nor of "structure," the rational organization of means to ends which responds to its own laws irrespective of the will of individuals. On the contrary, I try to break with the dichotomic "either or" alternative and attempt to bring to the fore the tensions between and within each of them. The examination of communication processes in a development project should reveal the permanent struggle of both forces at work. As these kind of projects are

generally regarded as the expression of modern, purported, rational action, their study provides us with an invaluable vantage point from which to assess the notions of rationality brought into play, the functioning of institutional arrangements, and the actions and meanings of social actors. The processes I am describing in these pages are marked by ambiguity, contradiction and heterogeneity; they simultaneously display patterns, common frameworks of reference and response. In writing, I try to recreate the systematic chaos of that which we call the real.

This study is particularly interested in critically examining the role of social scientists in development planning. Paraphrasing Bourdieu (1988), it attempts both to objectify the objectifying subject and to subjectify those who are generally objectified. In other words, it tries to analyze the effects of social scientists' practice and how it contributes to the creation of a given reality through their participation, expressed in their interpretations, concept formations and concrete actions. Conversely, it also looks at the dynamic role played by actors who are traditionally regarded as mere passive recipients of messages. Both population and planners must be present for the other to exist. There can be no relocation agency without a population to relocate nor can a population targeted for relocation exist without relocators. Practices and meanings are both the products and the producers of a

process of negotiation, signification and resignification among the various participants. This constant interaction is responsible for the creation of multiple representations. The process is not unidirectional. There is no such thing as an active producer and a passive consumer of meanings.

To analyze the functioning of the communication system in a development project we must consider the following aspects: 1) How the process unfolds in time and space, 2) the role played by the project-generated crisis, 3) the links between the process of positioning and communication practices, and 4) the communication practices themselves. These aspects will be reflected in the chapter organization of this study.

The unfolding of the process in time and space

The Communication System and History

Different categories of people within the relocation project relate differently to time. Participants situate themselves and others in time and manipulate it with various purposes. The uses of time are strategic power resources that contribute to self and collective identities and facilitate social control.

Systems do not emerge in a vacuum; they are historically produced. The social arrangements we observe and the components we take as constitutive elements of a

system carry the marks, the traces of past trajectories, when the components were not yet what they are and yet, already existed as something. The communication system set in motion once it is realized that a population will be affected by the construction of a large-scale project is informed and conditioned both by the past experiences of social actors brought together by such an undertaking and by preexisting knowledge, symbols and meanings.

The exploration of past socio-historical conditions is not a mere pastime that provides colorful details to set a stage. It provides an understanding of how meanings and dispositions, in the Bourdieuan sense of habitus, were produced (Bourdieu 1988:22-27, 1977). This notion of habitus, comparable to Giddens' (1984:7) practical consciousness, refers to learned behavior and experientially acquired meanings that are applied in new situations without conscious reflection.

We can understand history in two senses: as a complex of "narratives," constructions about the past that have an effect in the present (as in Faye's [1972:18-19] *effet de récit*) and as concrete facts that occurred in time (cf. also Verón 1984:45). We should look at the interplay of both, at what happened and at the different accounts of what had happened. As analysts, we cannot directly deal with real past events, but rather with various constructions of them. Despite these limitations, diverse accounts are important to

disclose how people process and react to events: they help us reconstruct the conditions of production and consumption of discourses (Verón 1984:46). In this study, chapters two and three discuss respectively, the history of the region and of the project, both as it is registered in various records and as it is recalled and constructed by different participants. Chapter four is concerned with the narratives dealing with the initial encounter between the affected population and the relocation agency. It illustrates how various participants initially interpreted the resettlement process.

The Communication System and Space

Like history, the description of space allows one to contextualize social interaction (Giddens 1984:132). There are two senses of space that I will consider relevant to this study. One relates to the actual physical setting where people interact, be it a house, the relocation headquarters or the office of a provincial administrator. The other refers to more broadly constructed spatial categories that are socially relevant, such as the neighborhood, the city, the region, the country. In examining space in the first sense, I will describe how it helps to shape the social encounters, how it can set constraints and help to enforce power relations. I will also look at the spaces favored by different participants and

will identify who operates in each locale.

The other sense of space will reveal how spatial categories are used rhetorically in the confrontation between different groups. I will be looking at the way people use spatial dichotomies such as the region versus the national center or the national space versus a foreign space to legitimate the project. The discussion of the spatial dimension is covered in various chapters. Chapters two and three take issue with the conflicts expressed in terms of region vs national center, and national vs foreign space. In the remaining chapters, I show how some of these spatial conflicts impinge upon the process of relocation.

Crisis and the System

The older views of systems depicted them as relatively stable, maintained by homeostatic principles. These orientations asserted that disruptive forces, which originated in the external environment, could cause the destruction of a system. This was the dominant scheme among authors such as Wallace (1956) and Loomis (1960) who analyzed disasters⁹: dam construction was sometimes considered a man-made disaster that created a crisis in existing systems comparable to those brought about by

⁹ Loomis says that disasters "occur when the social organization and units of considerable segments of society cease to function." Unlike Wallace, he recognizes that destructuration may also happen through the impact of internal forces (1960:130).

natural phenomena such as earthquakes and floods.

Similarly, analysts such as Bettelheim identified critical situations as dramatic disjunctures, characterized by unpredictability and insecurity which jeopardize learned daily routines (see Giddens 1984:61). Most authors also say that groups exposed to crisis move through several stages until finally they recover some sense of orientation, and hence equilibrium. Others emphasize the differences between an initial and a resulting state. Turner for example, speaks of liminality, to refer to an interstructural or transitional situation linking two states (1967:93). Although these authors acknowledge changes, they tend to assume a continuity of structure.

The irruption of development projects in people's everyday lives indeed generates crises with long lasting implications for all actors involved in the process. Nonetheless, such crises do not totally destroy existing social relations, neither are they an irreversible process: certain relations may be temporarily suspended though not permanently interrupted; they might reappear in a modified form.

A process comparable to rites of passage -rites indexing critical situations- takes place from the moment the future change is announced, until it comes into effect (see Turner 1967; Van Gennep ; Bourdieu 1982). In this process, new identities and meanings are negotiated and

specific rituals are performed, which also contribute to the construction of meanings. This moment is characterized by ambiguity and paradox (Turner 1967:97), by a recombination, reformulation and transformation of old patterns. Because of the disorientation created by the crisis, mechanisms of condensation and displacement are very common (Laclau 1979:93, Turner 1967). The concept of condensation derives from psychoanalysis and refers to a fusion process of various components and conditions into a single representation. Laplanche and Pontalis (1976:117) speak of displacement when "the accent, the interest, the intensity of a representation is detached and passed unto others which are not originally as intense, and both representations are linked through an associative chain." Jakobson compared the concept of condensation with the rhetorical tropes of metaphors and that of displacement with metonymy (see Laplanche and Pontalis 1976; and Lyotard 1974).

Participants are hierarchically situated. Those with the resources and a reward to promise are in a more favorable position to impose rules governing the communicational exchanges; consequently, they metaphorically take the role of "authoritative elders." This dominant position is ensured and reinforced by a continuous negation of the previous identities of those put in a subservient position. Whoever takes the role of elder relates to the others, the "initiated," as if they had no

history; elders ignore the social persona, they devalue the culture (Bauman 1987; Lechner 1986). These mechanisms of devaluation of selves and cultures, expressed in practices and meanings, engender a kind of interaction where some participants are generally passive and voiceless and others become active masters and teachers. Inability of the devalued to see alternatives and their increasing awareness that existing social means of dealing with problems fail to respond adequately to the new situation contribute to create a feeling of *fait accompli*. Thus, the way the initial actions occurred and were interpreted, together with the resulting rules and resources, are both enabling and constraining (Giddens 1984).

The ordeals, disorientation and lack of identity characteristic of crisis situations are not exclusively experienced by one kind of actor -a population affected by a project; other members of the communicational system may also find themselves in a subservient position. This is likely because positions are not fixed but are conditioned by the working of the larger systems of social relations in which they are inscribed.

Chapter four describes how the crisis evolved as seen by the various actors. Narratives recalling times previous to the announcement of dam construction allow us to see what aspects of their past everyday life were affected with the project generated crisis.

Positioning

People communicate through discourses which must be taken as social phenomena (Bakhtin 1986:259). Utterances (discourses) are constructed between socially organized persons who speak with a multiplicity of voices pertaining to (or stemming from) the various social positions each individual occupies (Voloshinov 1973; Bakhtin 1986). Rather than looking at the formal elements of discourse, we should explore the social conditions that render communication possible or seriously hinder it.

Positions -and identities- are defined, redefined, questioned and confirmed in the process of interaction (Rossi Landi 1970:15; Giddens 1984; Smith 1988). But what is at stake in their negotiation cannot be totally grasped through an interactionist analysis which limits itself to the immediacy of a context devoid of time and of social structural differences.¹⁰ As Bourdieu (1982) has noted, participants in communicational exchanges are carriers of a symbolic capital acquired through the process of socialization. That socialization guarantees the

¹⁰ Bourdieu says: "We should depart from the 'interactionist' perspective which, caught into the direct, visible immediacy of actions and interactions, is unable to discover that the linguistic strategies of different agents depend upon their position in the structure of distribution of linguistic capital, where we know that, through the mediation of the structure of opportunities controlling the access to the educational system, they depend upon the structure of class relations" (pp.57)

reproduction of social classes and other social categories. When interacting, participants do not produce discourses with the sole purpose of being understood. Utterances also contain signs denoting wealth to be valued and authority to be recognized and obeyed (Bourdieu 1982). There is a constant interplay between the formation of subjects in discourse and the production of discourses by subjects who are already holders of social identities (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Smith 1988; Althusser 1971).

The process of positioning is a complex one. It is based on a variety of markers present in social interaction: use of speech genres, forms of address, body gestures, and presentation of selves (Goffman 1959). It is of great importance to see how each participant positions the others because this reveals who is granted authority to speak. It also enables us to see whose discourse would be taken as legitimate, whose would be efficacious (Bourdieu 1982), whose would be "vraisemblable" (credible) (Greimas 1983:103), whose would be read "between the lines."

In communication processes, there is always a tension between the attempt to impose a unitary language and the reality of heteroglossia which acts as a reminder of social difference. Communication in development projects is no exception. There is an official language of planning and the languages corresponding to professional kinds of knowledge; there is a uniform, univocal national language and the

language of class and geographical regions (Bourdieu 1982; Bakhtin 1987; Voloshinov 1973; Burton and Carlen 1979).

Acknowledgement of differences, however, must not obscure regularities in discursive practices and interpretations observable in specific social contexts, historically and spatially situated. The search for regularities should not lead to a dissolution of the human agents, as structuralists' studies do. The subject, as Verón (1985:50) puts it, is the one mediating conditions and processes of production. To recover the subject/subjects is a political act and an act of transgression. It raises questions of power precisely where this is not acknowledged; it challenges a representation of society as rationally and naturally organized. It unveils a conception of subjects as previously constituted uniform units liable to manipulation (Lechner 1986:19; Bauman 1987:54,60).

I do not want to fall into a notion of a totally decentered subject incapable of reacting. I propose to depart from the positions very dear to poststructuralist thinkers, for, in their emphasis on theories of language, subjectivity and difference, and relativization of all sources of knowledge, they have divorced themselves from the real.¹¹ We should recover the concrete agents behind discourses who are involved in political practices.

¹¹ A similar proposition was made by Smith 1988, and by Lechner 1986.

Chapters five, six and seven identify the various actors who participated in the project, showing how each of them were positioned by others, and illustrate how the identities thus achieved shaped their communicative practices.

Communicative Practices

In everyday interaction, people not only assign meanings to what is uttered but also to body signs and objects that may be neutral in other contexts. I will try to reconstruct how people elaborate and explicate what is said and also what actions and objects they take as meaningful. But this can only be done through establishing a dialogue with participants from previous dialogues who would provide me with an already interpreted text. As Bakhtin noted, researchers must work with texts already created; texts are our point of departure (1987:113). Thus, I will call communicative practices those processes by which people construct texts to confer meanings to actions, objects and discourses. Communicative practices presuppose dialogical relations, that is to say, they involve an other, from whom the speaker expects a response, and they also imply preceding practices to which they are responding.

To describe these communicative practices we must identify what I will call dialogical sets, the particular communicative relations established with the advent of the

project.¹² Each of these sets will have addressors and addressees, those who produce a text and those who consume it. The condition of addressor and addressee is not fixed; they are constantly shifting from one to another role. Some dialogical sets are relatively stable throughout the project implementation, such as the one composed by the staff and the population. Others may develop within specific conjunctures and later disappear. This is the case with groups or individuals who form temporary sets by being summoned or deliberately assuming the role of mediators. Not only individuals but also collectives, such as a family or a professional group, may become addressors and addressees. It may well happen that individuals reify institutions and perceive them as purposeful actors. Therefore, it is likely that we will find some dialogical sets in which one or both of the members are not concrete actors but organizations.

In chapter five, I identify the basic dialogical set, the one which includes the population to be resettled and the Yacyretá relocation agency. Chapter six is devoted to the description of the diverse relational sets within the Entidad Binacional Yacyretá (EBY) and illustrates how some positioning devices affect communication. Chapter seven examines the role played by mediators in the communicative

¹² The concept of the dialogical is comparable to the concept of intertextuality, although according to Todorov, the first bears a more restricted meaning: an exchange of responses by two speakers (see Todorov 1984).

practices of the relocation process. Finally, chapter eight summarizes EBY's attempts to deal with communication and gives an example of a case study to show how communication worked. When looking at communicative practices, I will also be concerned with what is withheld and concealed.

Secrecy, the withholding of information, and the absence of dialogue occur for a variety of reasons such as coping with uncertainty, asserting authority, or protecting oneself or another. For example, analysts have noted that secrecy is a common practice among bureaucratic officials interested in gaining power. Similarly, other authors have stressed the relationship between knowledge control and power. It is likely that some staff members of a relocation agency seeking for recognition, or interested in maintaining an already powerful position, may be reluctant to disclose information to others. We can also expect that the people to be relocated would lie or withhold some information they assume could be used against them. Contexts where mistrust, concealment and obfuscation prevail will favor the inversion of meanings and/or the creation or transformation of others.

Particularities of the Yacyretá case study

The case I will analyze displays some particularities which make it unique among resettlement projects designed to cope with the effects of construction of large hydroelectric

dams:

- 1) It affects dwellers of an urban environment and not indigenous or peasant families living in rural areas as it is the case with many hydroelectric projects.
- 2) The team in charge of planning the relocation process included social scientists, both sociologists and anthropologists, who continued working through the implementation stage of the project. Although anthropologists had been involved in studying and criticizing resettlement projects, very few had been hired to take an active role in planning and implementing a relocation process.
- 3) The project suffered numerous postponements which prolonged the period of uncertainty -prior to relocation- far beyond what is common in similar undertakings. Indeed, although uncertainty is often mentioned as a factor influencing the crisis and stress generated by population displacement, I know of no other experience in which uncertainty persisted as long as in the Yacyretá project.
- 4) A great part of the prolonged relocation process occurred under a very repressive and authoritarian regime, a circumstance which impinged upon communication dynamics in a way which is probably unique among these resettlement projects.
- 5) While the relocation process was underway the economic situation of Argentina worsened and reached levels of

hyperinflation and unemployment which limited options and affected the type of strategies people would have employed under more stable conditions.

Undoubtedly, the exceptionality of some of the above factors set constraints on the population's ability to make claims and on the freedom of members of EBY's staff to design social programs to a degree which would be hard to find in other resettlement projects. Nevertheless, many of the responses and communication problems are not unique to the Yacyretá project although access to power resources and negotiating opportunities would probably be greater in similar cases elsewhere.

Although this work examines a single empirical case with very special characteristics, it can illuminate some contemporary debates. Since the 50s at least, when developed nations produced a rhetoric of the achievement of progress through planning, development projects have become "scientific laboratories" for the testing of different alternatives of social change. Hence, projects may be taken as privileged arenas to explore the links between theory and practice. The Yacyretá project allows us to see how different theoretical perspectives guide the practice of various professions. Powerful economic groups come together to finance these joint ventures, creating linkages among international, national and regional levels. In describing the intertwining of these levels I will show the conflictive

nature of those links sometimes expressed in the legitimizing rhetoric of projects. While decision makers representing the national state often emphasize the benefits such projects would bring to the entire nation, local leaders may praise the advantages of hydroelectric dams in terms of regional development. Policy makers justify these undertakings through ideologies that emphasize national progress and the common good. Thus, the analysis of communication processes in such projects offers an ideal entry point to examine, for example, how ideologies regarding development and planning are produced, circulate and are consumed, and also to explore the interconnections between knowledge, ideology and power.

So far, I have discussed the features to be considered when looking at communication in relocation projects. In the following sections, I will summarize how I gathered data to explore these aspects. I will then briefly outline the chapter contents.

Field Work on the Relocation Project

I did field work in Posadas, capital city of Misiones Province, from March 1987 until September 1988. I divided my time between periodic visits to Yacyretá's Relocation Headquarters, the neighborhoods to be relocated, the new resettlement neighborhood, and the provincial and municipal agencies set up to deal with problems related to the dam

construction. In each of these settings, I made observations of everyday routines. I interviewed people from each of these locales and I also contacted former employees, politicians and other individuals who acted as mediators. In addition, I consulted the archives of the local newspaper, *El Territorio*, and of the Entidad Binacional Yacyretá (EBY), both in Buenos Aires and in Posadas. To cover historical, demographic and economic aspects I used reference material from libraries in Posadas and New York.

Three students at the Universidad Nacional de Misiones participated as field assistants at different stages of the research. They obtained data from Yacyretá's files, classified materials from the newspapers and interviewed some of the people to be resettled. Two (Nancy and Gustavo) were students of anthropology and another (Susana) of social work. There are significant differences among the three: Nancy was born in Posadas, Susana in the interior of the province and Gustavo in Buenos Aires. They did not share the same theoretical background nor the same information about the purpose of the research project. Although I did not select my assistants on the basis of their different training or origins, in the long run these aspects proved to be relevant. For example, this circumstance helped to detect regularities of themes, irrespective of the various dialogical contexts in which we elicited information on the project. Thus, I could identify

collective concerns and the recurrence of responses that develop in processes of relocation. This does not mean that I negate the role played by the ethnographic encounter, with its corresponding negotiation of the reality to be depicted. What I do want to stress is the need for setting a balance between approaches that pose the limitations of social science knowledge by emphasizing the influence of the observer on that which is observed and approaches that claim it is possible to grasp the social mesh through using appropriate tools.

Chapter organization

In this chapter, I have summarized the purpose of this study. Through critically analyzing two possible ways of participating in social planning, I have proposed a way of observing projects which may provide guidelines to design future projects.

Chapter Two has a number of purposes. It is partly a historical reconstruction of the region's past; and as such, it looks at the interconnections of local, national and international socio-economic contexts. Mainly, it delineates some of the relationships among the three bordering countries of the region: Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. The chapter is also concerned with the connections and conflicts between the national state and the region and among cities within the region.

Besides registering past events, with this chapter I aim to showing how various representations of the region's past and present evolved. Moreover, I will describe how different social groups interacted and constructed images of each other that contributed both to create and to reproduce the system of social relations. Until recently, most of the history books dealing with the region or Misiones Province had been written by local amateurs. It is therefore very difficult to find reliable scholarly sources. To write this chapter, I have used old chronicles and local histories and organized the material according to the way I interpret these past events.

The chapter provides us with some clues with which to interpret the legitimizing discourses of the hydroelectric project, power struggles among various groups within the project, and the nature of the communicational behavior of participants. The chapter also includes a brief characterization of the present city of Posadas and its intertwining with a larger context. This description of the area as it is today helps us observe some continuities through time.

But there is an additional purpose of this chapter, one that can be blamed only on the author and is my sole responsibility. I intentionally make visible some historical events and actors that are generally negated. I assume this role of a transgressor -I confront the official version of

history- with the deliberate purpose of linking the present dwellers of the areas to be flooded with a past most of them ignore. In following chapters, I show that devaluation of the history and culture of some social groups has an effect on the way they get organized and respond, on how they are defined in the project, and on the social policies designed for them.

In Chapter Three I write about the vicissitudes of the Yacyretá hydroelectric project, including the various political and economic factors causing serious delays. I review the various interest sectors arguing about the construction of the dam, justifying it to the general public, and considering the issue of population relocation. Also included are a discussion of the organization of the local relocation agency, a characterization of the areas to be flooded, and an explanation of the compensation rights of the affected population.

In sum, these two chapters portray the context in which the drama of relocation is inscribed. They trace both the origins of the hydroelectric project and of the areas and population it affects, and they also look at the way various groups construct and misconstruct this process.

In Chapter Four, I describe the encounter between the population and Yacyretá's agents as it is recalled by participants. To recreate the drama of this encounter, to show how actors interpreted both actions and messages and

organized them into their own frameworks of reference, I construct a text with their own, multiple voices. Within this diversity of voices, however, we can discern regularities, some of which I shall analyze in particular; others may be drawn by the reader. Spanish was the language used in interviews. Some of the informants speak Guarani at home and use Spanish with outsiders. Others do not know Guarani but speak Spanish with an underlying Guarani grammatical structure, easily seen in the use of tenses, concordance between noun and verb, and meanings assigned to certain words. In translating their voices into English, I tried to be faithful to their style of speaking because it reveals certain kinds of communicative constraints. However, as I am not aiming at a formal linguistic analysis, I did some minor editing to make the accounts more readable.

The process of positioning of the different participants in the relocation process is discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. I examine which positions are granted power and how this impinges upon the communication process. Besides looking at the way positions are defined and redefined, I also explore mechanisms used by each group to assert or obtain more power. By looking at the process of hierarchical organization, we will also be seeing how meanings and knowledge are distributed and used by the various participants.

Chapter Five focuses on the basic dialogical set of the

hydroelectric project, the nexus in which Yacyretá and the population come together. Chapter Six concentrates on the analysis of the relocation agency's various staff members. Although it focuses on the communicative practices within the agency, it also looks at communicative exchanges with other external actors who contribute to the positioning process. Chapter Seven looks at the individuals and groups who play mediating roles in the relocation process. Chapter Eight analyzes EBY's attempt to deal with issues of communication throughout the years. Finally, this same chapter takes a study case to illustrate various communicational problems which arose in the long process of relocation.

The concluding chapter discloses and discusses my relationship to the Yacyretá project and reflects upon the role of social sciences in development.

CHAPTER TWO: MISIONES AND POSADAS. PAST AND PRESENT

Development projects express contemporary society's commitment to and faith in the future. Most planners adhere to the ideology of modernity which relies heavily on the power of science and technology to transform the world. In planning processes of social change generated by the introduction of a technological innovation many social scientists have followed this dominant paradigm. Thus, many thought that social science should contribute to bring progress to "underdeveloped" cultures and societies still attached to older and less efficient ways of dealing with their environment and subsistence needs. The role of social scientists, then, consisted in pointing out cultural and historical factors inhibiting social change. Consequently, if they examined history and culture they did so with the sole purpose of identifying obstacles to modernization. Such views were partially replaced by one that stresses structural factors present at the moment an innovation is introduced. In this latter case, history was regarded as irrelevant and planners did not include it as a variable to be reckoned with when designing a program of social change. Although the concept of development, as well as various

planning strategies of attaining it, has largely been criticized both in Academia and in the planning agencies themselves, many recent projects are still based on the same old principles.

The Yacyretá hydroelectric project is a good example of this. Preliminary feasibility studies did not analyze either the regional or the affected population's history. Nobody felt there was a need of dealing with such issues. Subsequent chapters will show that to ignore history is a mistake. Communication among planners, government officials, landowners and the displaced population can only be understood if we take into account how they interacted with each other in the past.

Chapter two shows how the past and present of Misiones is depicted by diverse observers. Versions of the past and of the present are contradictory and ambiguous, they depend on the structural position of each narrator. I attempt to maintain the tension among narratives expressing conflicting projects to allow readers to perceive how participants construct and make use of their representations to justify and affect their own actions. I intentionally avoid giving my own version although I am aware that the way I organized and selected accounts reveals how I interpret what is being described.

Accounts of past events provide us with clues for understanding legitimizing ideologies and behavioral

patterns observed in the relocation project. They allow us to see how biases were formed and persisted into the present. Discussions in this chapter let us see the marginal position of Misiones with regards to the national state. They also show us the need to see past and present regional interconnections: we cannot understand processes in Misiones unless we consider how they relate to developments occurring in Brazil and Paraguay, and in the bordering Argentine province of Corrientes.

Misiones, the Remote Jungle of Argentina

To the majority of Argentines, the province of Misiones is a wild and exotic place. They think of impenetrable jungle; hot, suffocatingly humid weather, the powerful Iguazú Falls, and the half-forgotten Jesuit missions. Argentines also think of this remote frontier as threatened. They worry that Misioneros are constantly exposed to foreign influences, namely Brazilian culture, and are unable to communicate in Spanish, the national language. Until recently, local government tourist promotions reinforced this image: a smiling tucan invited everyone to "join the adventure" and visit Misiones.

This picture of Argentina's northeastern-most province is partly accurate and partly inaccurate. It is a picture that is largely a function of the economic, political, and cultural dominance of another region of the country -a

region with a far different climate and ecology. Although Argentines acknowledge the tremendous differences between the various parts of their country, they tend to identify the whole country with the región pampeana. With one area within this region -the pampa húmeda- this identification is especially strong. Argentines associate this grain producing region, which includes Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, and Córdoba provinces, with the golden years of the country when, they proudly say, Argentina became the bread basket of the world. Cattle production was well established long before the pampa's rich soil and the temperate weather were found ideal for the development of large scale agriculture. Beef also contributed to the Argentine's identity; barbecued steak is regarded as the national dish.

By the turn of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a large number of European migrants settled in the región pampeana. The majority of them went to the major cities, accelerating the urbanization process. This was not what some members of the enlightened elites desired. Their intention was to encourage migration as a means to modernize the country through, among other things, the development of agriculture. However, very few foreigners could remain in the countryside because there was no available land. Public lands had already been allotted to the existing elites. Later in this century, during the period of import-substitution, industries developed in some

of the already important urban centers, this time attracting both internal and Latin American migrants. Today, about two-thirds of the total population of Argentina live in the provinces that constitute the pampa region and a great number of these people reside in large cities.

Two versions of *argentinidad*, or Argentine identity, became dominant during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The two are related to profound processes of transformation which were underway in the 1880s and both originated in the leading region with Buenos Aires as its center. One depicts nationals as European peoples committed to progress. This representation has probably found its most vivid expression in Sarmiento's (1961[1845]) "*Civilización y Barbarie*," in which he develops a dichotomic model where the interior is seen as a backward area with cultural features which inhibit the development toward modernity. The other version identifies nationhood with gaucho culture. Around 1880, a fraction of the elite began to romanticize the image of these *mestizo* cowboys, who were previously pictured very negatively: lazy, vagabonds, with no inclinations to form stable families. It was only after *estancieros* (land owners) ceased to procure their labor force through the invaluable help of judges and the police force, that transformation of gauchos into a positive symbol could occur. Conservative landowners jealously guarded what they associated as the base of their wealth: cattle raising which was facilitated

by frontier expansion. Many developed anti-foreign ideologies in the belief that the liberal project of agricultural production and the encouragement of foreign migration represented a threat to their old ways. But fears were unfounded as the land tenure system did not change.

Sábato (1988:24) maintains that Argentina's oligarchy has displayed a great adaptability to changes in production which developed as a response to world market conditions, namely the expansion of industrial capitalism accompanied by an increase in demand of food and raw materials from temperate regions. The dominant class, he argues, did not acquire its leading role simply by the ownership of land, but through its ability to combine ownership with the control of commercial and financial activities. Throughout the nineteenth century, production in the región pampeana, switched from salted meats to wool, then to cereals and finally to cattle in combination with grains. Although the liberal and conservative projects seem to contradict each other, in a short time both came to coexist quite comfortably: The cows ended up grazing next to the wheat and corn fields...and gauchos faces seemed to whiten, while liberal-oriented school syllabus dictated the study of "national dances" such as the zamba, gato, and chacarera, all of them encompassing the folklore pampeano, and hence, the gaucho culture.

Misiones resembles the pampas neither in climate nor

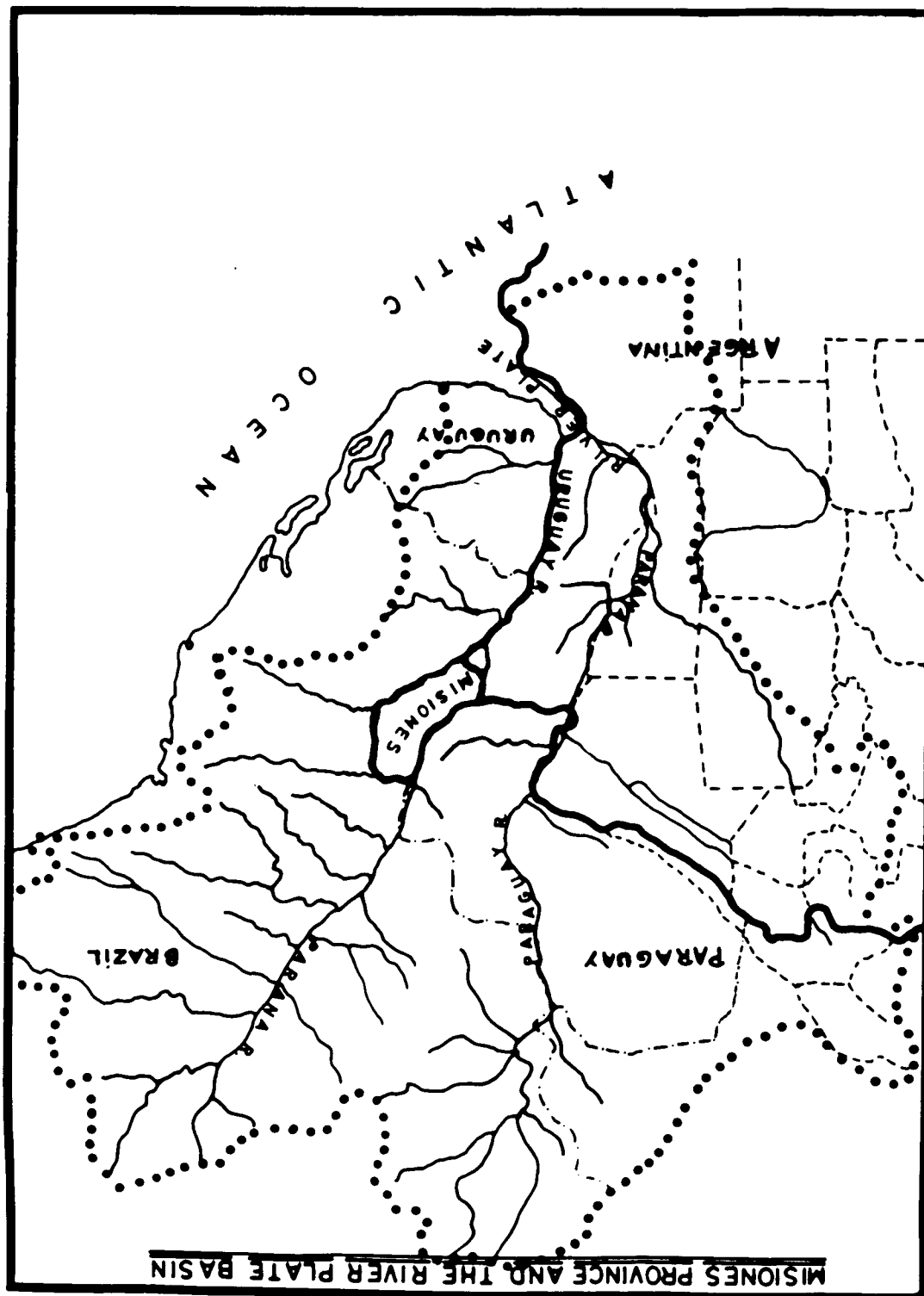
in soil. It is a subtropical region with very high temperatures in summer which may be as high as 42 or even 50 Celsius degrees. Its copious rains all year around, which average more than 2500 mm a year, enable the growth of an exuberant vegetation cover, a selva (jungle) for many, even though this is generally associated to tropical regions. It is truly a forest, el monte, as many misioneros call it with respect and admiration. Far from being flat as are the pampas, the province is rather hilly and in some parts it reaches respectable altitudes (700 meters above sea level). Anybody coming from Buenos Aires province is taken aback by the contrasts; they are assailed by fragrances and bright and shiny shades of green over an astonishingly red soil. Undoubtedly, such a scene bears no resemblance to the dull, pale yellows and greens that spread endlessly to the horizon over a grayish carpet of earth which characterize the pampas. It is these distinctions that stirred the imagination of innumerable visitors to the province when it was re-discovered by the turn of the century. Two hundred years earlier jesuits were also struck by the natural scenery and dedicated their efforts to study the great variety of fauna and flora. Observers either described the forest with admiration and enchantment or warned travellers about the numerous dangers which could be encountered in an "untouched" natural environment such as poisonous spiders, snakes, insects and different varieties of "ferocious wild

cats."

Cavazutti (1923) rightly observed that many earlier authors stressed the beauty and economic potential of Misiones. Very few had a hidden agenda, their message was straight forward: they were interested in promoting the region to prospective settlers and investors. Imbued with the modernizing ideology of the late nineteenth century, they were eager to advertise its promise to stimulate European migrants to come and develop agriculture. Cavazutti quotes Guillermo Godio who in 1886 addressed a most distinguished audience of Buenos Aires at the famous opera theatre Colón, a replica of the Parisian opera house. While there, he said:

The great secret of Misiones future, relies on agriculture. It is on behalf of agriculture that Misiones is destined to prove that the famous Eldorado which aroused the fantasy of the first conquerors, is not a chimera...From now on even the deaf and the blind would know that Misiones is one of the most precious jewels in the diadema of the Republic...(Cavazutti 1923:34).

Contemporary authors and common citizens sometimes describe Misiones as a wedge pushing its way between Brazil and Paraguay (see map 1). This image may convey the idea of a will to expand in what it is now somebody else's territory, a likely representation of not very unconscious desires. Others would metaphorically regard it as an arm, a part of the country's body which is disarticulated. The examination of any map of Argentina reveals why it is described in such ways. It is indeed a salient part of the



MAP 1

national territory, stretching to the North East. Corrientes province, which constitutes its south-western boundary is the only connection to the Republic. Beyond these limits, Misiones is surrounded by foreign lands -Brazil and Paraguay-. The physical configuration of the area helps us to understand in part why isolation, distance and foreignness are always major concerns for anybody dealing with problems of the area.

But what we now call Misiones used to be significantly different in the past. According to Argentina's historical accounts it was two thirds larger throughout colonial times and up until the eighteenth century. To be able to make sense of the tremendous transformations that affected the region in the past we have to consider the role played both by Paraguay and Brazil. In fact, it will also be impossible to interpret present events unless we take into account a larger region which goes beyond Argentina's frontiers. It is this greater spatial unit with undefined boundaries which represents the scene of struggles among the three countries.

Historical processes studied from Argentina's vantage point may be divided into the following periods: 1) The conquest and the imposition of the jesuit order, "the empire within the empire," 2) The demise of the Jesuits to the end of the War of the Triple Alliance, "Dark ages," 3) The rediscovery of Misiones, "from wilderness to progress," 4) Private projects of European settlement and the development

of export agriculture, 5) Provincialization and the introduction of new forms of production namely, agribusiness and hydroelectric projects.

1- The Conquest and the Imposition of the Jesuit Order

The first Spanish settlement with an Atlantic orientation in Southern South America was the city of Asunción founded by Domingo Irala in 1527. As early as the sixteenth century, chronicles addressed authorities, urging them to intervene among residents who "were men with neither law, nor King, nor God, nor morals." Authors like Lozano and Guevara compared them to pagans or berberiscos (Furlong 1978:p.30). Very few men formed families in accordance to principles prescribed by the Catholic Church and many lived *amancebados* (in concubinage) with more than one woman. The concern with making the local population conform to metropolitan family patterns as well as the ascription of negative features such as the lack of beliefs, morals and the failure to respect authority has been dominant throughout the region's history. These ideas either justified the replacement of the old inhabitants by European newcomers committed to the modernizing trends, or the domestication of their labor as will be discussed in coming sections and in chapter four.

By the turn of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth Century, when Spain was under the rule of King Felipe III,

the Jesuits were called into the territory in order to establish towns among the Guaraní Indians. Royal authorities also expected the fathers to convince their subjects to embrace Christianity. Thirteen towns were founded in the province of la Guayra on the left banks of the Upper Paraná river. Shortly thereafter, the Mamelucos¹ from Sao Paulo repeatedly invaded the area until it was destroyed in 1631. Both Indians and Spanish settlers were forced to take sanctuary West and South of the Guayra (Hernández 1973 [1887]:11). Such invasions reflected rivalries between Portugal and Spain over the control of New World's territories. Though legally settled by the Papal Bull of Alexander VI (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) they were differently interpreted by the contending parties (see, for example, Zeballos 1893, Zinny 1975). Ever since those times, the Portuguese and later on, their American successors, the Brazilians, have been depicted as sanguinary, ambitious, wicked and destructive peoples. Father Furlong (1978:117), a Jesuit scholar who dedicated his life to historical studies, concentrating on the role of his order in America, refers to some comments made by Cuninghame Graham, a Protestant, writing about the Paulistas invasions to the missions:

¹ The Mamelucos were the offspring of white and indian. They joined the bandeiras, which were expeditions into the interior, organized under local auspices for offensive warfare, mostly the capture of Indians (Morse 1965).

While the jesuits were organizing their reductions in the provinces of Guayrá, on the Paraná and the Uruguay rivers, a nest of falcons was looking at those who were neophytes to them and regarded them as chicks ready to be devoured. Back in San Pablo of Piratinga, in Brazil at 800 miles distance, a strange community was coming to life . Inhabited by adventurers and criminals both Portuguese and Dutch, San Pablo became a nest of pirates and a home for every hopeless being coming from Brazil and Paraguay.

The malocas, i.e., the Mameluco invasions, penetrated Argentina with the purpose of enslaving indians to be sold to Portuguese fazendas (large land estates). Authors estimate that as many as 30,000 Indians were captured during the seventeenth century. Although the Paulistas were defeated in the battle of Mbororé, they continued to be a threat to the Jesuit missions until their demise (Zeballos 1893:323, Furlong 1978:117).

Historians are divided when it comes to judging the role played by the Jesuits in this disputed region. While some maintain that they constituted a barrier that stopped Lusitans (portuguese) from invading the national territory, others stress their isolationist policies and claim they formed an "Empire within the Empire" which had loose ties with the Spanish Crown (Bove 1923; Furlong 1978; Lugones 1904). Both detractors and admirers agree that the Jesuit enterprise is a completely new experience on the American soil, worthy of careful research. This study does not attempt to address the many questions that remain unanswered about the role of this order in these subtropical lands. It

simply highlights some historical aspects which enable us to understand how the past and present of Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina are so much intertwined.

After the Guayrá's missions disappeared, Jesuits continued to control what came to be known as the 30 pueblos. They ruled over a vast territory, las Misiones, which spread from the Tebicuary river to the North West and the Yaguary river to the North East, Iberá's lake and the Miriñay river to the West, the Queguay river and Negro river to the South, and to the East as far to the present Brazilian city of Porto Alegre and the Laguna de los Patos.

The Jesuit fathers remained in the region for a century and a half. During their stay they controlled the lives of more than 100,000 indians. The missions became self sustained units where both men and women dedicated their time to crafts, agriculture and worship under the supervision of the religious order. The Jesuits undertook careful studies of the natural environment and experimented on the agricultural possibilities of the area. They were able to master the domestication of yerba mate, a stimulant herb from which a highly popular drink is made. When the Spanish Crown expelled them from the area, they left taking with them the secret of the domestication of the plant. A hundred years later, the exploitation of the wild plants required the use of the labor force of the mensúes, descendants of the inhabitants of the missions under inhuman

conditions. It was not until the twentieth century, that new settlers were able to obtain new cultured plants, after years of experimentation and numerous failures.

During colonial times both Asunción and Buenos Aires tried to gain control of the 30 pueblos of Misiones. By the eighteenth century, the area had become one of the wealthiest and most populated territories of the Spanish possessions in the Río de la Plata. Bishops from Paraguay and Buenos Aires, together with Colonial authorities started to accuse fathers of conspiring to gain autonomous control and argued that the order was dominated by foreign priests and that the few Spanish within it were all in subordinate positions (Lista 1883:23). In 1726, Royal Letters ordered that the Reductions of the Company in the District of Paraguay be placed under the jurisdiction of the government of Buenos Aires. This move represented one of the last efforts to defend the Jesuits from their detractors but it did not last long as roughly forty years later, in April 1767, Carlos III ordered the religious order to withdraw from the Spanish territories.

2- The Demise of the Jesuits to the End of the War of the Triple Alliance, "Dark ages."

We can hardly find historical accounts dealing with the 30 pueblos of Misiones during the hundred years that followed the Jesuit demise. Bucarelli, the governor of

Buenos Aires sent Franciscans, Dominicans and Mercedarians to replace the jesuit fathers. It was the beginning of fragmentation and the economic decay of what once was a large and prosperous territory. Oral tradition, travellers accounts and local historians tell us that the majority of the Guaraní Indians were unable to administer their pueblos once the Jesuits left. They also say that they moved back to the jungle to live as "savages" again (Hernández 1887:19). Many use this argument to criticize the role of the missions. They maintain that the fathers were extremely paternalistic and that they failed to teach them how to live in a civilized and self-sufficient manner.

Another version, concerned with finding the identity of the Misioneros, vindicates the heroic role of the Indians in the defence of the territory from Portuguese and Paraguayan attacks. The inhabitants of the pueblos are portrayed as peoples committed to the cause of Independence. We are told that they sent envoys to join the new revolutionary governments and that a local hero, the Indian Andresito Guacurari, a protegee of Artigas, the caudillo from la Banda oriental, fought fiercely against the Portuguese. Those who resisted the Lusitan attempts to occupy their land were unable to stop them and witnessed the destruction of a great number of pueblos. Chagas, a Portuguese General, was held responsible for all kinds of atrocities. The Paraguayans are also blamed for the

destruction of the missions on the Paraná river:

...the Marquis of Alegrete, Governor and General Captain of the Province of Rio Grande, ordered Chagas, his subordinate, to go across the Uruguay river and to destroy all towns on the western banks. A loyal executor of such a wild and terrible measure, Chagas took control of the town of La Cruz, without finding any resistance. He established his headquarters there, while his lieutenants Gama, Carvalho and Cardoso destroyed the reducciones (settlement of converted Indians) of Yapeyú, Santa Ana, San José, Mártires, San Carlos, Concepción, Santa María la Mayor and San Javier. To complete this vandalic work, General Chagas himself went upstream and nothing stood still where he stepped, he profaned cemeteries, burnt temples and murdered the scattered and frightened Indians. Following his example, the obscure Dr. Francia, dictator of Paraguay, ordered to evacuate all the towns on the Paraná river and set them on fire. A year later, in 1818, Chagas went once again across the Uruguay river and this time he had not left stone over stone. This is how the missions, the product of the intelligence and perseverance of the Jesuits, disappeared (Lista 1883:25).

While some praise Andresito and Artigas for defending the pueblos, others think that they were burnt and ransacked because of their actions (Hernández 1973[1887]:18).

Misiones was generally denied the right to have an independent government. After the Jesuits were expelled, Asunción and Buenos Aires authorities continued trying to gain control over those lands. Nobody desired to grant the misioneros an autonomous government on the grounds that they lived in a strategic area which could easily be attacked by Brazil. Many believed that in order to protect the boundaries, it was desirable to maintain the region under the control of a powerful central government and to appoint

a military representative. Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Corrientes, Buenos Aires and Paraguay either controlled or tried to protect the Misiones region at different historical conjunctures. In 1814, Gervasio Posadas, Supreme Director of the Provinces of the Río de la Plata decided that Misiones and Corrientes should be one province. After this decision, the political control was in the hands of the Correntinos and Misiones was scarcely inhabited. Authorities living in Corrientes failed to defend the pueblos of Misiones when they were attacked by Portuguese and Paraguayans. Some authors even contend that through secret agreements, Corrientes authorities allowed Paraguayans to occupy part of the Misiones territory during Rosas times (from the 1830s to the 1850s).²

Dictatorships and isolationism are features generally stressed when describing Paraguay. According to many nineteenth century chronicles, foreigners and intellectuals were not welcome (Zinny 1975). Dictator Francia and some of his successors tried to keep national boundaries closed to external influences. The so called *trincheras* (sometimes also called *tranqueras*) stand as a symbol of their closure. They were walls constructed to defend military encampments

² Juan Manuel de Rosas was a caudillo and rich landowner from Buenos Aires. He became Governor of Buenos Aires in 1829 and in 1835 he was granted absolute power. He confronted the provinces of the littoral because he did not want to allow the free navigation of rivers or the opening of customs in cities other than Buenos Aires.

which spread along the right banks of the Paraná river. The trinchera de Loreto seems to be the first one of these walls. Part of what is nowadays Posadas, the capital city of Misiones, was once surrounded by these walls. As Rosas prohibited the navigation of the Paraná river, the Paraguayans had to change their commercial route. They started to send and receive goods through Brazilian ports and their caravans crossed what is now the province of Misiones, camping in front of Itapuá, Encarnación, which stood across the Paraná river. Troops also camped behind the tranqueras from 1849 to 1865. The area delimited by the 2.50m high walls was actually a fort, known as Itapuá and Trinchera de los Paraguayos.

Paraguayans and Uruguayans alike believe that their country's history can not be understood unless we consider it in its relationship to the two giants surrounding them. In the War of the Triple Alliance (mid nineteenth century), Paraguay was indeed caught between two powerful forces, those of Argentina and Brazil. After its defeat, it found herself not only with less men but also with a smaller territory. As a result, Argentina had part of the old Misiones once again. This time, authorities had put it under the surveillance of Corrientes authorities.

On his return after triumphing over the Paraguayans, the victorious Brazilian general, José Gómez Portinho, left battalion number 24 on a hilly site in what is now Posadas.

It is said that the chaplain dedicated a mass to Saint Joseph, and from then on the place was called Trincheras or Tranqueras de San José (Fernández Ramos 1931:215; Abinzano 1985:792; Manzi 1910:141; Bove 1923:36). Together with the troops came merchants and neighbors from the nearby villages of Santo Tomé, Aguapey, and San Borja. In a short time, they had built a row of ranchos (huts) which spread diagonally from the gate of the trinchera to the natural port on the Paraná river. The majority of the settlers were coming from the Banda Oriental (Uruguay). The rest were French, Italians, Spanish and Brazilians. Argentines were a minority, only two, according to the records. From the very beginning, the village became involved in commercial activities. Its development is closely tied to the timber and yerba mate extractive fronts on the upper Paraná river. And so is cattle and mule raising which became increasingly important in the South of Misiones.

State representatives continuously denounced the practice of taking cows, timber and other goods into Paraguay without being sanctioned by authorities. Smuggling has always been a profitable source of income for the residents of the area. For many, it was one among other means of making a living. As such, very few regarded it as unlawful or worthy of negative moral judgments. But outsiders have always referred to it as one of the many issues deserving the intervention of the national state.

Records tell us very little about who inhabited Misiones and what they did for a living during the years of political turmoil in the provinces of the River Plate. In 1813, Belgrano's forces were sent to protect Misiones from Paraguayan claims; 32,000 people lived in the region representing as much as 7.2% of the total. Some decades later, immediately after the Argentine Confederation recovered control over the territory, authors comment that probably not more than 3,000 were struggling to survive either in the jungle or in poor huts built over the remainings of the Jesuit ruins (Lista 1883:33,109; Hernández 1973 [1887]:46). We will never know for sure the exact population figures. The 1864 Census was not taken on the national territories on the grounds that the "population of these areas was not civilized" (Argentine Republic. Censo de Población de los Territorios Nacionales 1912: 12).

3- The Rediscovery of Misiones. From Wilderness to Progress.

"Wild" and "Invisible" Inhabitants

The Jesuit enterprise represents the first attempt "to tame the wilderness" in the remote northeastern part of Argentina. The second one, started by the end of last century when explorers and surveyors sent by the national state reopened the area for "civilized" settlements:

Until quite recently, this marvelous land remained forgotten, but at the call of Motherland, that

pronounced its name, we all remembered that Motherland is also there, with its green woods and rich soil, waiting for other men with another goals to reproduce the marvels made by the humble missionaries without any other help but their faith (Lista 1883:4).

Writers say that before the rediscovery of the area, the land was unknown, forgotten and left in the "hands of anthropophagus Indians, some of them even with tails (Hernández 1973[1887]:98). The lake of Iberá in Corrientes, not too far from Posadas and the town of Ituzaingó where the hydroelectric project is now under construction, was believed to be inhabited by semivages and fantastic creatures:

It is widely famous and ignorance accounts for its prestige; that the center of Iberá is inhabited by small and black men, whose voices are heard on silent nights...(Lista 1883:5).

Those who hoped to convert Misiones into a prosperous and modern agricultural utopia found the existing population ill-suited for this transformation:

Today, it only exists as an ignorant, poor and arisca (wild, semi-savage) population, which survives on wild fruits and on the scarce maize and manioc they cultivate. It goes naked and barefoot across the jungle and lacks all elements of sociability (Hernández 1973[1887]:58).

For Hernández, the native men were lazy, unwilling to work or till the soil (Ibid:48). They were described as a "mixture of Indians, Paraguayans, Correntinos and Brazilians" who vegetated in Posadas or wandered in the jungles of Misiones either hunting or fishing for survival or offering their labor to those newcomers to the region who

started to predate the natural yerbales³ and woods.

Chroniclers believe that some of these men and women came after the War of Paraguay and that others were escaping political or criminal persecutions. Nowadays, the lower classes of Misiones continue to be described in the same manner.

The existence of the local population is acknowledged by very few of the late nineteenth century historians and travellers: as a rule, they remain invisible. And this is indeed what Hernández told us about them: "The Population is in the forest, invisible and unreachable, spread along the coasts of streams, or working in the yerbales(1973[1887]: 46). But his major concern was with the Spanish language which stood -as it does today- as a symbol of national identity. He complained that what they spoke had a little of" Guaraní, Paraguayan, Correntino and Brazilian" and that nobody spoke Castilian. Ever since those times, Misioneros have been continuously regarded as peoples who are not fully Argentine:

National solidarity is totally fractured, it cannot be said that Northern Correntinos and Misioneros are truly Argentines in their feelings. Difference of language is a barrier more powerful than the Ocean. And because of this, it

³ Until twentieth century colonizers found a way to domesticate the yerba mate plant, the only way to obtain the precious leaves was through exploiting the wild plants. The upper Paraná river had the largest of these wild yerbales. Sometimes, the location of the plants was kept as a secret, as the legend says was the case with the Tacurú Pucú (giant ant hill), one of the sites more widely mentioned.

is easier for us to get along with Europeans than with this fraction of compatriots. We feel more as strangers here than an Englishman in Buenos Aires (Hernández 1973[1887]:30).

Although by the turn of the century, many visitors to Misiones were praising the promise of the region for the development of agricultural and industrial activities, these dreams could not become true until many barriers were overcome. Communications, the land tenure system, the existing economic activities and inadequate human resources were seen by the advocates of the area as the major impediments for progress. As many of the enthusiasts of the region were Italian themselves, it is not surprising that these voyagers suggested to attract migrants from their homeland to settle in the region and replace the locals (Bove 1923; Ambrosetti 1892; Cavazutti 1923).

All authors agreed that unless something was done to improve communications, the area would remain isolated and underdeveloped. Since colonial times, the Paraná river and to a lesser degree the Uruguay river have constituted the major routes connecting the Misiones region to the main cities of the Spanish Empire and to European ports. As a shipwreck could easily occur, very few vessels would adventure beyond the Apipé rapids, three leagues North of Ituzaingó. Navigation to the Upper Paraná was only possible during the seasonal floods. Most of the steamships coming from Corrientes, ended their journey in the small village of Ituzaingó and from there, they continued by land to Posadas.

Another way of reaching Posadas was by ship along the Uruguay river up to Santo Tomé and from there, on wagons making their way over muddy roads on a two or three day tiring journey. It is not surprising then, that one of the major preoccupations at the end of the century was the improvement of communications.

Shortly after Misiones was made into a national territory, communications improved significantly. Major steps to break the isolation were taken at this time, but others which were as necessary, such as road construction were not considered for many decades. Commercial interests and the boom of yerba mate production encouraged the introduction of smaller vessels which could navigate the Paraná river beyond the Apipé rapids. The railroad which cuts across the province connecting the two main rivers and remote cities of Buenos Aires and Asunción was finished by 1912. The ferry-boat trips from Posadas and Encarnación were inaugurated in 1913. Highway communication was a much later development as it was necessary to build a great number of bridges to cross the rivers and streams draining into the Paraná.

Land tenure system and federalization

Once the Paraguayan War ended, Corrientes authorities sent surveyors to Trincheras de San José with the purpose of delimiting the area so that the town could be declared as the capital of Candelaria Department. By that time, it was

already becoming a busy commercial center because of its favorable geographical position with regard to communication with the upper Paraná, the towns on the Uruguay river and the Paraguayan village of Encarnación across the river. A decree from 1871 determined that the town should have a surface of 1500 varas⁴ divided into blocks of 100 varas each. It also determined that the chacras, 400 varas in size, should surround the central zone and be reserved for agriculture and animal husbandry.⁵ Shortly afterwards, in 1872, Municipal elections were held for the first time. The newly appointed authorities decided to grant plots to the first settlers of the town.

In 1881, Misiones became a national territory. The decision to put the region under the direct control of the central state coincided with great political, economical and sociocultural changes in the country. After years of internal wars and armed struggles with bordering countries such as the War of the Triple Alliance, the country became unified. In order to achieve its modernizing goals, Argentina initiated the frontier expansion to open up territories to agriculture.

⁴ Old Spanish linear measure (.84 meters).

⁵ The word "chacra" initially referred to Municipal divisions reserved for rural activities. Through the years, many of these sectors became urbanized but kept the name of chacras, to remind us of their rural origin. Chacra is now used as the equivalent of neighborhood or quarter. In subsequent chapters, it will be used as the equivalent of neighborhood.

This is also the time of the "conquest of the desert", achieved through the extermination of the indian occupants of the pampas. Misiones stood as another empty space to be conquered. Not surprisingly, the first appointed Governor to the province was Rudecindo Roca, a Colonel who fought against the Indians in the Pampas. Before Corrientes, in her "generosity," as chronicles of the time ironically said, decided to do away with the political control over this vast region, the majority of the land was allotted to a reduced number of families. Roca himself was one of the few favored ones.

In the beginning, Posadas remained a part of Corrientes province, but as a result of a claim raised by the new Governor, the Legislature decided to accede to the petition and the town became part of Misiones in 1882. Rivalries between the contemporary provinces are generally expressed with reference to the episodes of the late nineteenth century. Misioneros complain that Correntinos kept all the land to themselves, making it nearly impossible to start the colonizing process they had envisioned. Correntinos say Misioneros should be grateful as they managed to incorporate Posadas to their province.

By the turn of the century, visitors to Misiones repeatedly raged against the unproductive latifundios in the hands of feudal lords. They blamed the ongoing situation on Corrientes authorities. Hernández complained that Governor

Gallino sold the totality of the territory at a ridiculous price through granting certificates of public debt to members of the governing elite. Abinzano (1985) estimates that as much as 2,025,000 hectares were sold through these means. Fortunately, some of this land had to be returned to the State because the required surveys were not completed in due legal time. The lack of foresight on the part of the Correntinos who speculated with land created the availability for colonization. However, settlement of newcomers was only possible in the northern and central parts of the province where migrants became owners of family farms. The southern part remained in the hands of a few who owned large latifundios.

When Misiones was made into a national territory, its boundaries extended far beyond its actual legally defined limits. Brazil claimed a vast zone which was once under Jesuit control. President Cleveland was asked to intercede as the countries could not settle their disputes. Consequently, Misiones lost two thirds of its land and Brazil named one of its states Clevelandia in gratitude to the American President. Finally, in the early twentieth century, the extreme northeast of Argentina was ready for progress... with a shrunken territory and very little land to offer to the prospective European colonos (settlers).

The First Years of Posadas

Shortly after Posadas was made into the capital of the territory, it became a very active center which surprised anybody arriving at its port. The region's boom paralleled that of the American West. Yerba mate extraction, the "Green Gold fever" and the exploitation of virgin woods accounted for its prosperity. Some of the first merchants, who came following the victorious troops, soon became the owners of steamship fleets, important wholesale houses, industries, and land. One of them, Domingo Barthe, owned as many as 25 ships. In 1910, Manzi observed that Posadas port was one of the most important of the Republic, averaging the arrival and departure of seventy ships a month. As late as 1931, it occupied the fifth place in the amount of its of customs revenues.

While fancy shops and "culture" flourished in a "cosmopolitan" Posadas which rivaled in importance to the older city of Corrientes, another hidden city life coexisted along the coast line of the Paraná river. Architecture reflects the denial of the elite responsibility for existence of this other Posadas. The two-story pretentious houses of the prosperous families had no windows looking at the river, neither were they built in their proximity. It was as if they did not want to acknowledge that the source of their wealth relied on the river and on the exploitation of the men who lived nearby. The black legend of inhuman labor conditions and debt peonage started on the outskirts

of Posadas port.

For Posadas to be seen as a modern and developed town, it had to be mirrored against others which were not. Observers have always praised the advancement of Posadas by comparing it to the Paraguayan town of Encarnación and the village of Ituzaingó in Corrientes. In 1883, Hernández described Ituzaingó as a poor village of not more than 600 or 700 people where it was nearly impossible to find supplies or good means of transportation that would enable him to continue the journey to Posadas. There were no brick houses and the majority of the homes were made out of cane. Bove (1923) believed that this miserable settlement owed its existence to the fact of being the last port on the Paraná river before the barrier of the Apipé rapids; there was no other choice than to use it to deliver the merchandise to and from Misiones. After the War of the Triple Alliance; Encarnación was as poor as every other place in Paraguay, there were no adult men, only women and hungry children. Impressed by its poverty, Hernández remarked that because there was no lime and no concrete, houses could not be built. By 1910, unlike these two settlements, Posadas had, as described by Manzi, private schools, a school for teachers, a theatre, social clubs, a Masonic Temple, a market, a Hospital, three newspapers (El Oro de Misiones, el Pueblo, el Noticiero), and various magazines and periodicals

(1910:144).⁶ Bove (1923) says that with federalization, the city grew very rapidly and the price of land inflated considerably, duplicating its value in a few years. Although some early visitors speak about the agricultural production of Posadas farms, others insist that there was very little produced and that the government should encourage the settlement of farmers, "as the naturals are so lazy that they do not grow anything on the fertile soil where they live. They are surrounded by elements of progress, but they have no desire to improve their vegetative condition" (Hernández 1973:48).

The rural areas of Posadas included many of the contemporary working class and marginal neighborhoods such as Villa Gutiérrez, Villa Mola, Villa Blosset, Hospital Regional (Fernández Ramos 1931:242). Many of these chacras were named after the owners of the land and the big merchant houses.

Economy and Labor

Labor demand for agricultural and cattle ranching activities in the south and for some industries located in Posadas as early as 1875, such as the yerba mate processing plants, competed with the yerba mate and timber interests.

⁶ Even as early as 1892, it was significantly important compared to the other two. At that time, Ambrosetti (1892:117) said that it had two hotels, saddleries, blacksmiths, carpentries, leather shops, photography stores, Postal and Telegram office, a Municipality, Customs, prefecture and an agency of the national bank

The accounts which comment on the abandonment of agriculture suggest that lumbering and yerba mate extraction succeeded in attracting the workers. It remains a mystery how they managed to do so. Although there are no studies on this topic, it is quite likely that the commoditization of the local economy is related to this process. Tobacco and other agricultural activities relied heavily on family labor and it is possible that they employed no salaried workers. Looking at historical records and descriptions of the area at different points in time, it seems that the local population was highly mobile and that it migrated very frequently to wherever there was labor demand as it continues to be the case nowadays.

In an account written in 1916, on behalf of the Centennial of Independence, the writer summarized the history of the educational system in Posadas. She wrote that close to the port, there was a school where children from poor families attended. She mentions another one to which the sons and daughters of jornaleros (day laborers) went. There was a school of agriculture, around which the neighbors were said to be people "with little knowledge who had once worked in the yerbales, obrajes and fruit plantations" (cited in Pobur 1988). Some literature also suggests that when they left as peons, they did not totally abandon their peasant farming in the outskirts of Posadas. I believe that subsistence production may well have remained

in the hands of their women as it can be inferred from reading some authors who tell us they performed agricultural activities such as tilling the soil.

The *mensúes* were the men working in the yerba mate plantations and sawmills in the wild subtropical forests of the upper Paraná river. On the Bajada Vieja, a street that went straight to the port of Posadas, *conchabadores* (contractors) hired their labor force and paid them in advance. In many cases, payments were not made in cash, but rather in merchandise which the peons bought in Posadas stores controlled by the two or three owners of the companies. Before leaving, many were already indebted as they spent their cash in goods and in the brothels and bars that spread around the port. What they owed was written in a booklet which they could not read as they were illiterate and therefore they were unable to control what was charged to them. In 1912, Inspector Ruiz Moreno observed that there existed 48 *boliches* (bars, groceries and gambling places) and innumerable illegal prostitution houses which explains why they were anxious to get payment advancements. He also commented that it was not surprising that they could so easily be exploited, given the fact that they "were in an environment which lacked morals" (República Argentina:1914).

From Posadas port, and sometimes from Encarnación's as well, the ships headed to the Tacurú Pucú or to other places where the *mensúes* were expected to harvest yerba mate leaves

or to cut down the trees and send the logs downstream in jangadas (rafts). Employers provided neither tools, nor shelter, nor food and they even charged for the journey to the work place. In the jungle, there was no store, other than the company's, which charged exorbitant sums for staple goods. The workers could hardly meet the debts with their work and very few were able to return when they wished. Those desiring to leave the place could not do so unless they had the patron's permission to board one of the company-owned vessels.

National and International papers denounced the situation. Anarchists, socialists and other concerned citizens visited the obrajes⁷ and yerbatales⁸ to assess the labor conditions. There were some that even "went native" in order to better describe the horrors in the yerbatales. This is the case of Bouvier who employed himself in one of the companies so as to observe and report on the working conditions. The national government sent inspectors to visit the region. Although they did their best to find what happened, they encountered very few people willing to speak openly about the matter. On occasions, tragic or macabre facts were so apparent that nobody could pretend ignorance.

⁷ The obrajes were places where timber was extracted and later sent downstream the Paraná river to the city of Posadas and other towns nearby.

⁸ Yerbatales were the places where yerba mate leaves were harvested from wild plants.

One day, the Paraná waters carried three dead bodies to the coast of Posadas. As it was impossible to deny this frightening event, authorities blamed their origin on Brazilian timberyards or yerba mate fields. The Brazilians in their turn, asserted the bodies came from Paraguay (Cavazutti 1923:125).

Some people imagine the mensúes as solitary fellows with no families. The reality was somewhat different; many of them travelled with their women who shared their labor and hardships. Cavazutti, quoting Bouvier, tells us that women were sold to cover the debts left by their runaway companions (1923:153).

Nearly every foreigner coming to Posadas and Encarnación for the first time was amazed at the sight of busy women involved in petty trade and contraband across the river. They were called either *paseras*, because they "pass" goods or *villenas* as they were from Villa Encarnación. Not only did they bring fruit and vegetables to the market but some were also said to be involved in the trade of large quantities of yerba mate which they sold to the cities of Paraná, Corrientes, Santa Fe and Rosario. A hundred years later, *paseras* continue to come to the local market of Posadas and to private homes, offering their merchandise with the familiar "¿Qué le vendemos patroncita? (What shall we sell you my little patron?)."

While the big companies reigned, the National State

limited itself to inspecting the installations and regulating labor conditions, although they knew that most of the laws would never be put into practice. Wherever and whenever it was possible, the government intervened more actively. In the Southern part of Misiones, it initiated the first colonization experiences and in addition, tried to give deeds to the existing population. The refusal to become proprietors through paying a small sum for the registration of the deed, was interpreted by Spegazzini (1914:33), as a proof of "little attachment to land" on the part of the local population. A similar situation was registered by Hernández (1973[1887]) some decades earlier. When the government announced it was going to found the colonies of Santa Ana and Candelaria and that it planned to grant land to the residents, rumors suggested that the authority wanted to enslave them and many were ready to migrate. This example also illustrates one of the first attempts (1887) of the central authorities to "domesticate" the regional population. They promised to give the land on the following conditions: 1) to cultivate, 2) to watch the animals so as to avoid the destruction of somebody else's sown fields, 3) to send their children to the town school, and 4) to marry. As was the case with the Jesuits, about two hundred years before, and with projects such as Yacyretá a hundred years later, the federal State was determined to "civilize" the Misiones population through labor, education, and marriage.

By the end of the 1920's, many of the big firms had closed or moved their central houses elsewhere. Ironically, one of the sons of Barthe, the owner of one of the largest merchant houses, together with other elite youths from Asunción, took Encarnación by assault in 1931, proclaiming it a "soviet." After their failure, they sailed to the Tacurú Pucú, and tried to stir up a revolt among the workers; however, they were defeated by the armed foremen (for a detailed account, see Abíñzano 1985). These exploitative conditions and the struggles they engendered did not end abruptly. Rather, the situation was gradually transformed as new forms of production were introduced and local and international demand changed.

As late as 1930, the state still did not know the location and the extension of many of its public lands. However, it had already allotted part of them to families coming from diverse areas of Europe who settled in the territory. Many ethnic groups were represented: Russians, Austrians, Germans, Ukrainians, Swedes, Galitzians, Swiss, French, and Italians. One group of migrants was not interested in agriculture but rather, in commerce. They were the "turks", the generic name given to Syrians, Lebanese and people coming from Arab countries, who rapidly gained control of the majority of the bars and stores in the Bajada Vieja.

4- Private Projects of European Settlement and the Development of Export Agriculture

Beginning in the 1920's, the majority of the migrants were recruited by private colonization companies. Unlike those preceding them, many of the new settlers had come with more money to invest and thus had access to larger and more productive lands. The majority of them were of German origin. The colonizing companies acquired land in the Upper Paraná and new towns developed, with a predominantly European population. Until the construction of highway 12 linked Posadas with the Upper Paraná region roughly 25 years ago, the northern part of the territory remained isolated from the capital of the province and from Argentina as a whole.

In the North of the province, there existed for some decades a stratified society which was ethnically differentiated; the rich, the landowners, tended to be white and fair haired, and the wage laborers tended to be dark "criollos". Although many descendants of the European migrants now live in Posadas, their "culture" has not yet been recognized as an integral part of the "cultura misionera" by the self-appointed guardians of local "tradition". Those who claim the right to define what is truly "misionero" are the Posadas residents, generally those related to the first "families", originally coming from Corrientes, Uruguay, France, Italy, and Spain, and from

other parts of Argentina. Among them, there are still many that believe they have the mission to "argentinize" the foreigners and to "misionerize" Argentines from other regions (see Ferradás, González, Urquiza, and Sintés:1988).

Many of the European pioneers grew yerba mate on their family farms and made a profit for some years. Successive crises created by a fall in demand combined with over-production later compelled them to diversify production. Thus, through the years, they incorporated other cash products into their production schemes, such as tung (aleurite), tea, tobacco, and citrus fruits (for a detailed discussion on these processes and their effects, see Bartolomé 1975, Baranger 1978, Boleda 1983, Palomares 1975). All of these crops are subject to cyclical booms and busts, determined by world market conditions. To avoid the intensification of the yerba mate crisis, the government subsidized producers from 1953 to 1952. At different conjunctures, it did the same with other export crops.

There are very few records from this interwar period, as opposed to the previous one, where innumerable written records registered the potential of the region and described the scenery. Gone were the days that depicted Misiones as the promised land. Misiones was finally settled, but many in the region found that survival was a daily struggle. The depression years (1930s) slowed down the growth of the capital city and its hinterland. Very few public works were

initiated or planned and private investment also diminished. Nevertheless, important things were accomplished during these years: the streets in the central part of the city and the avenues surrounding them were paved; two Municipal markets were inaugurated; new schools were built, and the urban bus service started. In the neighborhood known as El Chaquito, Mr. Heller opened a factory which became so important that the railroad made a special extension to connect with it. A meat processing plant and a lumber mill were also built in the area. All these activities attracted workers from Posadas, from Paraguay, and from other parts of Misiones who settled in the outskirts in areas which will be flooded with the Yacyretá hydroelectric dam (see Pobur 1988). During the thirties, many chacras were subdivided and sold, giving birth to new working class and lower middle class neighborhoods. Other lots were sold in the fifties, after Misiones became a province of the national state.

5- Provincialization and the Introduction of New Forms of Production: Agribusiness and Hydroelectric Projects.

In December 1953, Misiones was made into an autonomous province under Federal Law 14294. By that time, most of the public lands had already been allotted and the colonizing process had ceased. Instead of receiving migration flows, the province gradually became a source of labor to industrial centers. This loss of population was related to

an agrarian crisis which deteriorated in the 1960s and simultaneously affected the major crops of the province.

While the prices of industrial crops were falling, timber production started to develop. Stimulated by government policies, middle class sectors such as professionals and merchants together with representatives of strong capitalist sectors, invested in the Northern part of the province. Timber production is now under the control of what De Janvry (1981:111) categorizes as "capitalist estates and commercial family farms."

Large agribusiness began to dominate Misiones scene in the 1960s. Its interests were opposed to those of small producers and family farmers who joined the MAM (Agrarian Movement of Misiones) to fight for price adjustments and other claims such as availability of credit, regularization of the land tenure system and social welfare system.⁹ These protests, which included mass demonstrations and the closing of highways, ended abruptly with the military coup of 1976.

⁹ Bartolomé (1982) considers the MAM as a movement comparable to the agrarian populism of the American farmers. Elsewhere (Ferradás 1986) I have argued that these movements bear many resemblances with other Latin American peasant movements. They developed in the 60s under the influence of Catholic groups which encouraged participatory actions to counterbalance the predicaments of the left after the Cuban revolution. They generally developed in backward regions which were suffering the effects of the world and national markets. There was an internal differentiation within these movements. Each group represented was interested in making different claims but they stayed together as long as there was a particular conjuncture which affected all of them in a similar manner.

Some leaders were sent to jail, while others had "disappeared". Repression was both felt in the countryside and in the urban based organizations that supported the movement, such as neighborhood commissions, unions, and university groups.

During these last decades, many small producers had been forced to leave as they were unable to maintain their "subfamily farms". Some, had gone to Posadas and built their homes in the lowlands of the city, but the majority left to places as far as Córdoba or Buenos Aires. During the 60s, the population of Posadas averaged an annual increase of 30.5 per thousand; this was the lowest growth rate recorded. In the 70's, it began to grow more rapidly. The population of Posadas was 95,864 in 1970, and 143,889 in 1980. The expectations raised by the announcement of the construction of the Yacyretá hydroelectric plant, are generally mentioned as pull factors explaining the migration flow to Posadas. Workers, technicians, professionals and investors settled in Posadas, hoping to make a profit with activities related to the dam in some way or another: construction business, real estate, tourism. As years passed and very little was accomplished, many left the province again. The creation of the Universidad Nacional de Misiones in the 1970s also acted as a factor attracting students and professionals.

For the older Posadeños, the 60s and 70s represent a period where the configuration of the city totally changed.

It ceased to be a place where they knew everybody. They suddenly found themselves surrounded by outsiders. The locals do not like newcomers and generally call them "parachutists". They complain that they take the best jobs from them; that they occupy many decision-making positions without having any familiarity with and commitment with the province; and that, in general, they are only interested in making a profit and when the goal is achieved, they all leave.

Today Posadas faces major problems as public works did not follow the population growth. A great part of the city lacks running water, there is no gas supply, very limited areas are connected to a sewage system(10%), and energy costs are the highest in the country, as part of the electricity is bought in Paraguay and prices are adjusted in foreign currency. Many of these problems are expected to worsen with dam construction as the city has not built many of the engineering works necessary to meet new demands. Water supply is insufficient and many of the new housing compounds (both the ones built by Yacyretá and others built by the provincial state) lack water because new plants and pipes are not large enough.

As early as the 1950's, national authorities, began to discuss the potentialities of rivers of the River Plate Basin for hydroelectric projects. But not until the beginning of the last decade, had national authorities and

regional residents became truly concerned with the construction of dams. National and regional goals were not necessarily the same. The national government was trying to find a cheaper means of providing the industrialized center with energy and to respond to the "aggressive expansionism of Brazil." The Misioneros, were willing to have energy sources cheaper than the existing ones, to attract investments, and to develop industrial poles so as to provide more jobs for its surplus population.

Many hydroelectric projects have been discussed. Some are under study, others are being constructed by the province with great sacrifice and financing problems. Among all of them, the Binational Yacyretá hydroelectric project is the most ambitious one.

CHAPTER THREE: THE YACYRETA HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

The Paraná river played an important role in the earlier development of Misiones as it is shown in chapter two. After attempting other means of activating the region's economy, both the national state and local authorities of Misiones have once again reconsidered the river potential for development and thought that construction of hydroelectric dams would be the best solution to achieve their goals.

This chapter summarizes how the Yacyretá project was conceived and negotiated. In examining the history of the project I show the effect of political and economic processes on decisions related to the hydroelectric dam. While in the previous chapter I analyzed the emergence of rivalries among the Argentine province of Misiones and the neighboring countries Brazil and Paraguay, in this one I will show how these rivalries are played out to justify the project. I also consider the use of ideological constructions to present the project to the general public. I then compare this case with others mentioned in the specialized literature. This chapter also includes a brief characterization of the hydroelectric project and a

did the study.

1- The Yacyretá Hydroelectric Dam: Main features

One hundred years ago, the barrier of the Apipé Rapids accounted for the interdependencies among Trincheras de San José (now Posadas), Encarnación, and Ituzaingó. The first two, depended on the port of the latter one, to deliver all the timber and yerba mate from the Upper Paraná river and to receive the basic staples. If the rapids had not been there, the Paraguayans and the Misioneros could have easily sustained themselves without Ituzaingó. However, the rapids were all too real and constituted a major concern of anyone willing to develop the region. Not everyone wished them away, some believed that the rapids might be used to their advantage. In the late nineteenth century, a Basque, don Francisco de Basaldúa, "who toured the Iberá and the Upper Paraná, considered it feasible to construct a hydroelectric plant, making use of the Apipé and Carayá rapids (See El Territorio. Suplemento. July 1983:2)

Roughly a hundred years later, the three cities are again tied together in connection with the rapids and the islands of Yacyretá, Apipé Grande and Talavera. This time, the construction of a huge hydroelectric plant is creating new bonds and affecting each area in various ways. Ayolas, a Paraguayan town, has become the fourth member of this new interdependency. Thousands of workers, technicians and

professionals have been moving to the encampments in Ituzaingó and Ayolas, the cities next to the working site. Both Posadas and Encarnación will be suffering the major impact of this huge project. Once the gigantic reservoir is filled, about 81,500 hectares in Paraguay and 25,000 in Argentina will be covered by water. Important areas of the urban infrastructure and highly populated neighborhoods will disappear with the flooding. To relocate the 40,000 people losing their homes, the two countries are building 2,000 houses in Encarnación and 4,500 in Argentina. They are also constructing train stations and railways, new ports, sections of highways, bridges, and public buildings on both banks of the river. Major improvements will be made to the sewage system, water supply, telephone network and energy sources. While some small industries and stores will be relocated, others will receive compensation money.

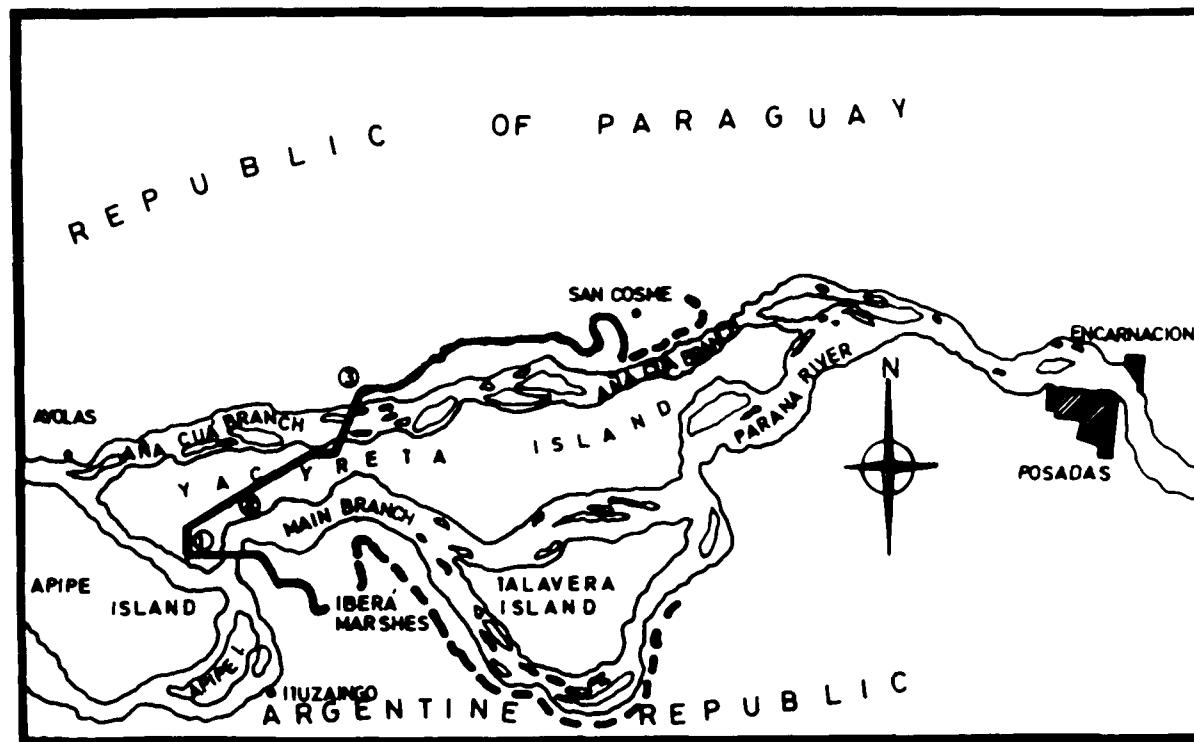
The major works include the main dam and a control dam. The first one is now under construction; the second one, which will be located 88 kilometers to the South, is still under study because final site remains to be determined. The main reservoir will be formed after building a dam across the navigable channel of the Paraná River, immediately downstream from the Apipé Rapids. The dam will spread 20 kilometers along the island of Yacyretá; it will then, cross the shallow Aña Cuá channel off Clavel Island. Once it reaches the shore, it will stretch along the riverbank to

the towns of San Cosme and Damián in Paraguay (see map 2). The lake thus formed, will cover 1,600 km², 13 times the surface area of Asunción and 8 times that of Buenos Aires. The gigantic reservoir will extend 200 kilometers with a maximum width of 21 kilometers and a depth of 35 meters. The navigation lock in Rincón Santa María, will allow ships of different sizes and tonnage to overcome an unevenness of 23 meters. There will be two spillways: one, located on the main channel of the Paraná; and another one, on the Añá Cuá. Both of them together, will allow the passage of a maximum of 95,000 m³/second. Two irrigation gates are planned to stimulate agricultural development of land on both banks of the river. The hydroelectric plant will be built on the Island of Yacyretá. In the first phase, it will include 20 Kaplan turbines, generating 138 megawatts each. The construction design provides for the addition of 20 more turbines in future stages of the project¹.

2- History of the Project

There is no general agreement as to when discussions of the Paraná's potential had begun. Yacyretá's public relations leaflets and the articles in *El Territorio*, the local paper, trace the origins as early as 1905, when technicians "appointed by the General Office of Navigation

¹ For additional information on engineering specifications, see: *La Ingeniería*, # 367, Centro Argentino de Ingenieros, July 1986; *Esto es Yacyretá. Suplemento de El Territorio*, July 1983; EBY 1979, 1980, 1987)



MAP: THE YACYRETA HYDROELECTRIC DAM

References:

- 1- Spillway
- 2- Main Dam
- 3- Earth Dam

- Future lake
- Main Works

and Ports from the Ministry of Public Works made hydrometric observations and systematic appraisals of the river and the rapids. Some years later, the Argentine National government asked two engineers to determine the feasibility of hydroelectric development using the various rivers of the region. Their studies included recommendations on two historic concerns in regard to the Apipé Rapids and the nearby islands: the construction of a dam and the facilitation of navigation. In 1926, the Argentine and Paraguayan ambassadors to Washington signed an agreement contemplating the possibility of initiating this construction. As time passed, enthusiasm for the hydroelectric possibilities of the Paraná faded.

The project which was originally called Yacyretá-Apipé has been haunted by countless delays ever since its inception. Contributing factors to the postponements include: financing problems; the unstable political situation of Argentina; the clash of interests of the two participating countries, common in bilateral projects; and pressures exerted by powerful economic groups. The combination of all these circumstances has impinged upon the total cost of the project and the completion date, making both vary greatly through time as is shown on table 1. Consequently, uncertainty and lack of credibility have been a necessary byproduct of these constant changes.

Throughout the 30 years of Yacyretá's history,

Table I: Anticipated Cost of Hydroelectric Project; Political System, Ruling Parties and/or Presidents in Argentina; Completion Date; Causes of Delays.

Year	Due date	Total cost** U.S.\$	Political system	Causes of Delays
1974	*1981 1984	1.35 4.05	Democratic FREJULI J.D.Perón	Disagreements between Argentina and Paraguay -Technical Problems -EBY's internal regulations -Project design.
1977	1985	7.19	Authorita- rian Gral. Videla	-Project design. -Compensation to Paraguay for the loss of land.
1980	1986	--	Authorita- rian Gral. Videla	-Bidding Process. -Action of - regional, national and international power groups.
1983	*1990	4.29	Authorita- rian Gral. Bignone	Bidding Process. -Financing.
1985	*1992	6.00	Democratic R. Alfonsín	-Labor strikes. -Budget Problems.
1988	*1993 1996		Democratic R.Alfonsín	-Budget cuts. -Labor strikes.

* First Turbines.
** In Billions

Argentina alternated between democratic governments and military regimes with diverse ideological and economic orientations, while Paraguay was ruled by only one man, General Alfredo Stroessner.² When the 1958 agreement was signed, General Aramburu was the Argentine de facto President of Argentina. He came into power shortly after President General Juan Domingo Perón was overthrown. The Vice-president was Isaac Rojas, an ultra-nationalist Rear-Admiral who had always been concerned about the geopolitics of the River Basin and continuously warned of Brazilian expansionism.

In 1958, Arturo Frondizi won Presidential elections with the support of Peronists whose party had been proscribed. He was the Intransigent Radical Civic candidate. Like most Argentine constitutional rulers, Frondizi was unable to govern until the end of his term. After a coup, he was replaced by José María Guido, the President of the Senate. The fate of the next democratic ruler, Arturo Illia, a member of the Radical Party, was not very different from that of his predecessors. General Onganía's Revolución Argentina of 1966 abruptly put an end to his presidency. Military rulers did not survive longer than their democratic counterparts: Onganía governed for four years (June 1966 to June 1970); General Levingston, his successor, for only one

² General Stroessner remained in power until February 1988 when General Andrés Rodríguez seized power putting the longest one man dictatorship in Latin America to an end.

(June 1970 to March 1971); and General Lanusse, for two years (March 1971 to May 1973). Democracy was given another chance in 1973. This time, Peronism participated in elections under a different name: FREJULI (Liberation Justice Front), with the support of both right and left wing factions within the party and in alliance with various parties of the most diverse ideology. As Perón could not seek the presidency, Cámpora was made the candidate of the front. It was the first time in ten years that Argentines were choosing their President. Votes favored Cámpora and he became President of the country; but he did not continue long and neither did the more radical members of his cabinet. After governing for two months, he resigned under the argument that the population should have the right to choose their beloved leader. In October 1973, General Perón became President for the third -and last time- in his life. By the time he took office, right wing members were succeeding in controlling the State apparatus. After his death, when his widow María Estela Martínez de Perón, "Isabelita", became the first female President in Argentine history, the ultra-nationalist groups were already controlling the majority of the key posts. They had also managed to get rid of governors who represented the left wing sectors of the party. Some of these governors were said to be backed by the Montoneros, a Peronist guerrilla group which went underground when Perón publicly reprimanded and

dismissed it during a mass demonstration at the historic Plaza de Mayo.

The military led another coup in 1976. They imprisoned Isabelita and thus prevented her from completing her presidential term. The Process of National Reorganization or the Proceso, as people called it, began with this coup. The military took over with the excuse of putting the "house in order". This meant state control of every citizen and the physical annihilation of anyone under suspicion. Under this extremely repressive regime there was very little room for protest or resistance. The Armed Forces had no intention of letting civilians govern the country again. They would have probably remained in power for many more years had they not been defeated in the Malvinas War of 1982. The disastrous failure in that war opened the eyes of common citizens allowing them to realize the horrors the country had passed through during the previous years. Unable to make any legitimate claims to stay in power, the military had retreated once again and called for democratic elections in 1983.

With great expectations, Argentines voted the UCR candidate, Raúl Alfonsín to the executive office. He received a devastated country: a gigantic foreign debt, a shrinking industrial sector, thousands of "disappeared" citizens, unemployment, illiteracy, and hunger. Many would have liked to believe that with the advent of democracy,

things could magically change. But great transformations did not occur because authorities had to run the country facing the opposition of many powerful groups such as the Church; various economic sectors including the financial and landed elites and the so called "industrial captains"; the labor unions; and the Armed Forces.

Three major events in the history of the Yacyretá project occurred while Argentina was facing very different political circumstances. The Yacyretá Treaty was signed during Perón's presidency; bidding processes for project design and major contracts took place during the Military government; and civil works were started under democratic rule, during Alfonsín's presidency.

Many people claim that the joint agreement signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the two neighboring countries on January 23rd, 1958, was a key event in the endless history of the project. However, papers of that time did not seem to be particularly interested in the issue: a few lines on page 7 on *La Nación* mentioned the creation of the Comisión Mixta Técnica (CMT) to assess the possibilities of generating electricity through the use of the Apipé Rapids. Another task of the CMT was to find a way to make the Paraná River navigable in the proximity of the islands of Apipé and Yacyretá. Initially, studies had to be finished within two years but the *Cartas Reversales* from 1962 extended the deadline for two more.

The **Notas Reversales** of 1970 exchanged between Argentina and Paraguay determined that the consulting firm should be chosen through international bidding. The Consortium Harza y Asociados was selected to undertake the Economic, Financial and Technical assessment of the project which was to be used as a basis for the Binational Treaty. On December 3rd, 1973, Vice-president Isabel Martínez de Perón went to Asunción to meet President Stroessner with the purpose of signing the **Tratado de Yacyretá** (Treaty of Yacyretá). During the visit, the two ministers of foreign relations stressed brotherhood and friendship between the two countries. The Treaty, it was said, was a major step towards Latin American integration, a fashionable theme in the Argentina of those days:

Argentina is determined to give what it ought to in the understanding that all the countries in the continent would also contribute, as we believe that Latin American integration and unity are unavoidable if we are willing to accept history's challenge (La Opinión, September 7, 1974).

Peronists believed that their President, a Third World leader, should follow San Martín's path, by playing an influential role in the unification of the Spanish-speaking countries. This dream of "La Patria Grande" envisioned by Perón's followers, could not be accomplished because the old General died shortly after he became President of the Republic for the third time. When "Isabelita" took office, Argentina was in political turmoil. Fights among competing factions within the Peronist party continued and were

becoming increasingly violent. López Rega, the Minister of Social Welfare, popularly known as "El Brujo" (the sorcerer) because of his dedication to the "occult sciences", was very influential in Perón's government. To get rid of political opponents, he created a paramilitary group, known as "the Triple A" (The Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance) that threatened, kidnapped, and killed hundreds of people. Meanwhile, guerrilla groups attacked military barracks and led different actions in cities and in the countryside. Because of this situation, the government declared a state of siege which remained in force throughout the military regime that seized power in 1976.

With the excuse of the threat of leftist assaults, all citizens were put under surveillance. Guards asked visitors to leave identification documents and registered their names and persons they would see, before allowing admittance into public buildings. These controls also occurred at Yacyretá's headquarters. The EBY had its own special services who scrutinized visitors and investigated employees before and after being hired. During the military years, they also controlled and limited access to the neighborhoods that would be flooded with the dam. Even University teachers and students doing research at the request of the EBY, needed a special permit to enter the area. Permission was only granted after carefully studying the personal records of each participant.

In Ituzaingó, the local population was not allowed in the neighborhoods built for the EBY staff and for the contractor's employees. Fences separated the original town from the new buildings. These fences no longer exist but Yacyretá still maintains many of its restrictions.

Control on public buildings were loosened with the advent of a democratic government in 1983 by removing the guards from the entrance. Yacyretá is one of the few exceptions to this. Admission to EBY's premises is still limited: people must identify themselves and give reasons for their visit. Security personnel behaves as if nothing has changed in the Argentina of the 80s.

The political struggles of Isabel's years help us understand how some policing features of Yacyretá emerged. However, they do not explain why they had become an integral part of the institution. Similarly, the political situation of those years was a contributing factor to the weak response of the local population but it cannot be taken as the sole cause for the lack of involvement.

On December 3rd, 1973, the day the Yacyretá Treaty was being signed in Asunción, Misioneros were attending to the funeral of their Governor and Vice-Governor who died in a plane crash two days before. Many suspected that their death had not occurred by accident whatever the causes were, the tragic end of the province's authorities opened a period of heated disputes for succession. Misiones became an arena

where the ongoing ideological struggles would be tested through the election of the new authorities. Every party had invested large sums and sent cadres to campaign in Misiones. The sinister Minister of Social Welfare had made use of the entire State apparatus to win the favor of the voters and defeat opponents. The right-wing sectors of the Peronists were particularly interested in defeating over a radical faction, which separated and formed a new party, the Partido Auténtico. This party had a following among members of the Movimiento Agrario Misionero (MAM), a fairly active rural movement which the central government was eager to weaken (see chapter two). All means were considered valid for the destruction of the left: threats, physical annihilation, and political defeat through elections. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that Misioneros did not show much concern when the Treaty was signed and the EBY was created. Especially if we consider that at that time most of them ignored the likelihood that the dam would affect their lives.

3- Ideological constructions about Hydroelectric projects

The construction of huge dams, such as Yacyretá involves a particular kind of development project. The literature includes hydroelectric projects in the category of "large works", "large projects" (Rofman, Brunstein, Laurelli, Vidal 1987), "large scale projects" (Ribeiro 1985), and macroprojects (Murphy 1983). All these concepts

emphasize grand dimensions, something shared by all these projects and easily observed in the engineering works, the machinery employed, the earth movements, the lakes that are created. Capital investment is also large and so is the demand and movement of labor, features that made Ribeiro emphasize the gigantism of these projects.

The rhetoric promoting these projects stresses the enormous size of everything connected with these enterprises. Leaflets and press releases convey this idea of grandiosity through pictures and comparisons such as:

The power plant is 70.4 m high; the Obelisk, in the city of Buenos Aires is 67 m and the Pantheon of Heroes in the city of Asunción is 37 m.

3,800,000 m³ of concrete volume will be employed. An equivalent volume is necessary to build a highway connecting Asunción and Buenos Aires (1,400km).

Features distinguishing this undertaking from others help to depict Yacyretá as exceptional, unique: "Together with Itaipú it is the biggest Latin American public work"; "It is the Work of the Century". Through emphasizing the exceptionality of certain outcomes of these projects, negative effects such as population displacement and the flooding of land are presented as positive to the general audience:

YACYRETA IS NEWS IN POSADAS...Because the transformation of Posadas, will include the largest relocation of population of its kind in the world...(EBY, Bulletin 1, July 1980).

According to World Bank experts who evaluated this case based upon studies made by local

professionals of the EBY Social Area; what is going to happen here has no worldwide precedents with regards to the number of people and the surface of urban nuclei - Posadas and Encarnación together -, receiving the impact of the dam. With the exception of the Aswan dam in Egypt, which required the relocation of 100,000 people - but from the rural sector, there has never existed the need of moving 40,000 urban dwellers because of the construction of a hydroelectric dam. Because of this, as analysts will say, Yacyretá is unique in its type (Esto es Yacyretá. Suplemento El Territorio. July 1983).

In 1958, a group of UN experts defined the integrated development of watersheds as "the orderly management of hydraulic resources of basins, in its utilization for multiple purposes to promote human welfare"(Viladrich 1972:12). Yacyretá is advertised as a multipurpose project. Its benefits, EBY maintains, "go beyond the use of electrical power: it will facilitate navigation, tourism and irrigation". It promises that "the settlement of new populations and industries will invigorate a largely forgotten zone of the River Plate Basin. Most of these goals are expressed in the majority of large-scale projects, but only on exceptional occasions are they achieved successfully. It has long been noted that investments on these projects are made with only one purpose in mind: energy production. The rest of the objectives are for public consumption, they aim at legitimizing dam construction through portraying it as something that contributes to the common good. Although these benefits are advocated, project design rarely includes any indication as to how these

benefits might be achieved Efficacy in obtaining citizen's consent largely depends on the type of objectives emphasized in the projects. Those projects addressing shared concerns are more likely to succeed in winning public support. Undoubtedly, no population is homogenous and interests do change through time. However, some ever-present symbols and themes exist which do have a wide appeal.

As discussed in the previous chapter, navigation, tourism and irrigation were already a major concern when travellers, government envoys and private prospectors were assessing the development possibilities of Misiones more than a hundred years ago. Some visitors observed that the lack of good water supplies could be one of the factors inhibiting the development of agriculture in the Posadas surroundings. Every traveller complained about the hardships and dangers encountered when trying to navigate upstream beyond the Apipé Rapids. And many also insisted that the natural marvels of Misiones would attract tourists. Today, many Misioneros believe that tourism, "the industry without chimneys", should be one of the main areas of development.

Very few areas of Posadas have running water. The closest ground water is below thick layers of basalt reachable only through the use of dynamite, a very expensive process requiring very specialized labor. Agricultural activities rely heavily on generally abundant rainfall.

However, occasional droughts do occur and crops fail. The Municipality of Posadas cannot cover the demand for water when it is scarce and the majority of the population lack the economic resources to buy it from private providers. Because of this situation, promises of more water are always welcome. As far as water is concerned, feasibility studies and the Yacyretá project design only refer to irrigation in a very vague way. It is not clear whether there exist specific plans on how to distribute irrigation water; neither they specify if complementary works such as channels or small reservoirs would be built with the purpose of improving agriculture.

Trains, trucks, and planes have long replaced the steamships on the Paraná river; but the taming of the Apipé rapids still stands as a symbol of what must be done to communicate Posadas to the country and to the world. Some social sectors seem to assign more importance to navigation than others. An editorial on El Territorio (March 29, 1988), entitled "The Paraná, river of life", compares this river to the Nile and says that both of them have "nurtured the seeds of civilization and progress". Regretting the gradual abandonment of water transportation, it summarizes various hypothesis:

The Argentine flag has nearly disappeared from the River Plate Basin, but we will not attempt to formulate a hypothesis about the origins of these complex phenomena. We will only mention that some attribute it to the lack of freight; others to bureaucratic impediments, and to obsolete

elements; others to a supposedly disproportionate weight of maritime union claims; others to the convenience and speed of surface transportation; and even some others, to the existence of powerful extranational interests, related to the industrialization and commercialization of trucks.

The newspaper article continues by saying that it is quite surprising that we neglect navigation when the so-called developed nations are increasingly valuing these means of transportation even though they have the best roads and cars. It concludes by wondering if Misiones can afford the luxury of wasting "this liquid road, 4,700 kilometers long. It is not surprising that an ex-Navy official, the ultra-nationalist and anti-Peronist Rear Admiral Rojas (1979) insists on the use of rivers. According to him, Peronists are responsible for the substitution of ships by other means of transportation:

The abusive and demagogic clauses which abound in collective labor contracts, an inheritance from the totalitarian system initiated in 1943, were continued and reinforced by the succeeding governments since May 1st, 1958.³

Kaul Grünwald (1982), an author with a similar geopolitical obsession, is concerned that Itaipú might alter the river water level and thus impede navigation. He

³ By saying demagogic he also connotes "populist", the two concepts were employed interchangeably to refer to Peronism in a derogatory way. After the 1955 coup removed Perón, his name could not be mentioned. People used euphemisms such as "the totalitarian government", "the dictator", "he, who is in Spain". The "succeeding governments" refers to the civilian presidencies of Frondizi and Illia, the former took office right after Rojas Vice-Presidency during the de facto government of General Aramburu.

advocates the construction of Corpus, another hydroelectric project on the Paraná. He is convinced that this is unavoidable if Argentina wishes to maintain the desired volume of the river. He also favors the construction of Yacyretá on the same grounds. These works will also help, he asserts, to break with Bolivia's and Paraguay's mediterraneity. From Argentina's geopolitical point of view, the support of Paraguay, Bolivia, and Uruguay is decisive to maintain the balance of power in the Southern Cone.

The renovated interest on the construction of a dam developed in relationship to the oil crisis. The same day the newspapers were announcing the signature of the Treaty and the creation of the Entidad Binacional Yacyretá (EBY), a pathetic photograph published in La Nación, showed the barren streets of Rome under the prohibition of the circulation of private cars during weekends with the purpose of saving gas. Oil prices also had a devastating effect on the Brazilian economy as its industrialization process was highly dependent on fuel imports. This situation encouraged Brazil to find a way to supplement oil with other energy sources. The decision to build hydroelectric dams on a great number of their rivers is a response to that problem.

Itaipú, a large dam to be built jointly with Paraguay on the Upper Paraná, was the most ambitious project. Negotiations between Brazil and Paraguay stirred the nationalism of many Argentines who pressed the government to

improve diplomatic relations with Stroessner's regime. Yacyretá and Corpus, were seen as national responses to counterbalance the possible effects of Itaipú, a project that was decided unilaterally by Brazil without consulting the governments sharing the river downstream. Because of this issue, Argentina proposed to the United Nations, that countries desiring to use a common river should consult all affected parties before making a decision (Clarín, Dec.17, 1974).

Newspapers said that Peronists blamed the previous military governments for the impairment of relationships with Paraguay. According to the press, it was thanks to Perón himself that Argentina reached an agreement with Paraguay, overcoming the "Paraguayans reluctance inspired by the hidden hands of Itamaraty"⁴. It was also because of his "personal intervention that the national congress finally ratified the 1973 Treaty despite some doubts raised by political opponents who wondered whether Argentina had been excessively generous with Paraguay by conceding a credit of 50,000,000 dollars; promising the construction of a bridge connecting Encarnación and Posadas; and conferring too many compensations. Opposition parties had also shown concern with the first article of the Treaty because it said that

⁴ There are numerous articles commenting on the role played by Brazilian diplomacy (Itamaraty, the Ministry of Foreign Relations). See for example, Revista Cambio, Dec.1974; El Cronista Comercial, January 9,1974; El Litoral, Dec.30,1974;

the dam could "eventually attenuate (minimize)" the effects of floods, but no serious provisions were taken to study a way of controlling them (La Nación, February 2, 1974).

In 1974, Paraguay enjoyed a very favorable position. It was as if it could finally take its revenge, a century after its defeat in the War of the Triple Alliance. Ironically, the two countries that stopped it from becoming an industrialized nation, were now offering it the energy to run the factories it did not have. Argentina made various offers to win Paraguay's favor: experts visited Asunción to study the possibility of establishing aluminum and cellulose factories; government envoys offered to open lines of credit to develop agriculture and other productive activities (Mayoría, April 13, 1974). As Paraguay needed very little electricity, it could set the conditions to give permission and to participate in the construction of the dams. The Argentine press, expressing the concerns of many citizens, frequently complained about the neighbor's requirements which caused innumerable delays and raised the costs: once, they wanted the project design to be modified because they understood that too much of their territory would be flooded; another time, they argued over exchange rates.

4- Regional participation

When Treaty negotiations were underway, local governments had practically no participation on the

decisions connected with the dam. They were neither consulted when feasibility studies were made, nor told to what extent their territories would be affected. Nevertheless, the Paraguayan-Argentine Committee claimed that it was the first time that a project of that kind let local governments participate by "providing ideas and bringing up their concerns." Although the press reported that provincial authorities expressed similar opinions, their request to have a group of technicians explain the characteristics of the project in the understanding that it might affect a considerable number of local families, indicated they felt insufficiently informed and dissatisfied (La Nación, Nov.18,27,1974; El Ande, Nov.27,1974).

According to El Litoral, a Correntino paper, in the opinion of some distinguished residents, Yacyretá was a challenge "plenty of best wishes". When referring to the dam, the local press made use of the same rhetoric as the one employed by the country's leading papers, foreseeing a future of progress, industrialization of backward areas, and regional development. Unlike these major papers, provincial journalists echoed the ever present local concerns: competition between Misiones and Corrientes; and fear that the "center", Buenos Aires, would make a profit out of their sacrifice. To achieve the promised goals of the project and avoid the risks of being cheated once again, Correntinos were told they should have "to defend the natural rights of

the province." (El Litoral, January 1st, 1974).

5- Environmental and Social Impact

Neither the studies made by Harza and Associates nor the Treaty itself paid special attention to the environmental and social impact of the dam. Newspapers from the early 70s were very vague when referring to these issues and none of them had really asserted that vast sectors of the cities of Posadas and Encarnación would be flooded, let alone that a great number of residents should be relocated. When relocation was mentioned, articles began by saying "it is believed" or "everything leads to the prediction that the waters will flood." Remembering that the first studies were made 50 years before and that negotiations were very often interrupted, some journalists doubted that the project would ever be finished (La Nación, August 26, 1974). On page 16 of a press release, experts from the CMT briefly commented that effects of the project on urban centers will be felt in Posadas and Encarnación. They estimated that about 10% of the population of each city should be relocated. They added that by en large, the cities would benefit from the relocation. It is worth quoting the reasons why they believed so:

Those zones, lacking sanitary installations and which are now subject to recurrent floods, will be replaced by modern units provided with these services. During the floods, the inhabited areas facilitate the propagation of contagious diseases, constituting a threat to public health and

therefore they should be eliminated.⁵

In August 1974, the **Coordinadora de Barrios de Posadas** (Posadas Neighborhood Coordinating Committee) representing 52 **Comisiones Vecinales** (Neighborhood Commissions) expressed concern on the future of the population of Posadas as feasibility studies estimated that 2,800 km² of the city would be flooded. They also worried about the possibility of a rise in the price of land and that this would particularly impinge upon the poorer residents of the city. The Law of "no innovar" (status quo law) passed by the provincial legislature aimed at preventing real estate speculation⁶. It did not allow the sale or improvement on property that was supposedly affected by the dam. It was meant to avoid massive eviction of illegal occupants or tenants from private land that until then had been of very little value. The regulation originally created to protect the deprived social sectors resulted in a negative effect on their lives in the long run as will be discussed in chapter eight.

6- The Yacyretá Relocation Agency

After the Yacyretá Treaty was signed, the Entidad

⁵ These comments which clearly show the biases of the authors, who equated poverty to disease were curiously included on a section called "Benefits of the project Yacyretá-Apipé with regard to the future control of the floods".

⁶ On the regulation of the law, see *El Territorio*, November 11, 1974. On its contents and purposes, consult *La Nación* November 18 and *La Nación* 26, 1974.

Binacional Yacyretá (Binational Yacyretá Entity, EBY) was formally created. The joint agreement determined that the "Entity" (as many people call it) would have headquarters both in Buenos Aires and Asunción, the capital cities of Argentina and Paraguay. Both countries would appoint alternate directors. A board of directors composed of representatives from the two countries would meet periodically to take decisions related to the project. In Argentina, Misioneros and Correntinos resented the decision to establish the main office in Buenos Aires as they regarded this as an expression of the national state centralism. throughout the years, the local press from both provinces protested against this measure but were incapable of obtaining a change of location. Not until 1989, when the Peronist party won Presidential elections were Misioneros able to achieve their desired goal: to convince national authorities to move Yacyretá's headquarters to Posadas. Contrary to widespread expectations, the move did not improve interaction with the displaced population. On the contrary, procedures became more bureaucratic and visitors to EBY had to talk to numerous staff members before they could reach the employee they attempted to see. As the new head of EBY was using his position to promote himself as the future governor of Misiones, he created new positions to appoint political supporters. He thus created a complex bureaucracy where very few employees had the adequate skills

to perform the activities for which they were hired.

But throughout most of the project, the headquarters remained in Buenos Aires and decisions were made from the capital city without even visiting the relocation sites. In Posadas, various professionals struggled to influence decision makers living in the remote center of the country. The Posadas office has a sector in charge of legal aspects of relocation, a technical sector in charge of inspecting construction works in the city, and of surveying the relocation zone, and a social sector in charge of the relocation program. The organization of each sector changed as years passed. When I studied the project in 1988, the the Relocation Program was organized as it is shown in the chart on page 117.

Relocation Sites

The area to be flooded was first determined in 1974. Many years later, Decree 1585 established that all areas bellow elevation 84 would be affected, including those spaces that should be cleared because of the construction of complementary works such as the bridge connecting Posadas-Encarnación, the water pumping station, the port, accesses to highways, railroads, customs. It comprised the chacras that spread along the coast line of Posadas and the areas encompassing nearby streams that flow into the Paraná river (see map 3 page 118). All these lands are very low and

URBAN PROGRAM OF RELOCATION AND SOCIAL ACTIONOrganizational Chart

1988

Director

An Anthropologist

Monitoring and ControlSection

One Business

Administrator

Administrative SupportSection

One Secretary and one driver

Plan of Social ActionSectionChief: A Social WorkerSupervisor: A Social

Worker.

Field team: Five Social

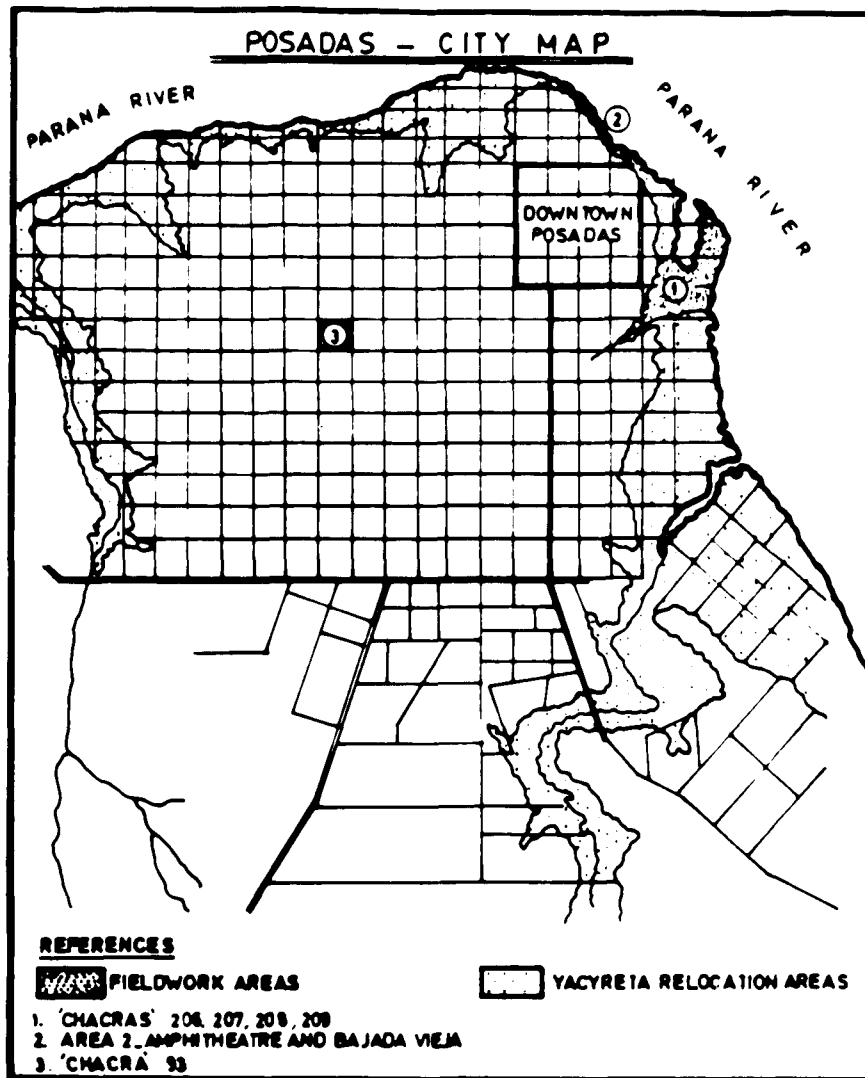
Workers

Research and Programs DesignSectionChief: A SociologistResearcher: A SociologistTechnical assistants: A

Social Research Specialist

A Computer Analyst

An Anthropology Student



MAP 3: RELOCATION SITES AND FIELDWORK AREAS

therefore, they are exposed to periodical floods. Because of their vulnerability, most of these lands had always had very little real estate value. With the exception of a few residential houses built in the outskirts of the pretentious "Aguacates" neighborhood, the majority of the homes are very precarious. A great number of these humble dwellings are built on public or private lands (69%).⁷ The 1979 Census estimated that 31% of the household heads to be relocated owned the plots where they lived. While some settlements are at a walking distance from the city's center, a square delimited by four main avenues enclosing 256 blocks; others are considerably away from it. Those living in some of the densely populated sectors, depend on either permanent or transitory occupational opportunities offered in the (nearby) downtown Posadas.

The further we go from the city center, the more scattered the houses are. As there is more available land, people raise more farm animals and grow more vegetables. Here and there, we find *olerías*, small brick industries run by local craft men who take advantage of the soil's qualities and proximity to the water sources. All along the coast, we can see small fishing boats sailing to procure some *dorados*, *pacúes* and *surubies*, some of the most

⁷ When the 1979 Census was taken, 31% of the household heads declared to be owners of the plots where they lived, 21% were either tenants or occupants of the plots under the permission of the owners, and 44% were intruders in public or private land.

appreciated local fish which will be sold in the streets or consumed at their own homes. Some of these same boats can be seen late at night wandering quietly on the Paraná's waters. Small candle lights draw fantastic shadows over the river. These fishermen say they are catching fish, many Posadeños whisper you that they are smuggling merchandise from Paraguay: they might bring electronics, cigarettes, whisky or drugs.

Each sector has a different history of space occupation. A few are as old as the capital city itself or emerged during the first decades of the century when river related economic activities flourished. Houses also grouped on both sides of the railroad all the way down to the ferry boat connecting Posadas and Encarnación. When the river and the railroad stopped being the main communication links, some areas lost their dynamism but did not disappear, many of the residents stayed waiting for better days while engaging in activities in the informal sector of the economy. The opening of new highways connecting Posadas to its hinterland and to the rest of the country attracted squatters who settled in the surroundings and formed new neighborhoods, some of which became densely populated.

There are neighborhoods where residents recognize fairly well defined boundaries which do not necessarily coincide with the limits of the chacras. Other quarters only exist as such in the Municipality records and their

inhabitants do not have any sense of belonging. The existence of any kind of local identity and community bonds, however, was not the concern of those defining the relocation stages and the districts to be included in each of them. Like other projects of this kind, space and time are controlled by engineering needs. Thus, space is artificially divided in accordance to the order set for the major and complementary works.

The EBY divided the areas to be relocated into three stages. There was a fixed time assigned for each stage and a "target", a desired outcome to be accomplished: to relocate a certain number of people. As Robertson noted, development planning is characterized by an orderly progression from one balanced state to another, where the neat, mathematically defined units of time refer to cycles of project management rather than to fragments of "real" historical time (1984:113).

To the social scientists working on EBY's relocation program, the stages are a given and it is unthinkable to question the rationale involved in determining them. It is something imposed from above, designed by unknown actors, in an unprecise time prior to the hiring of the social professionals. The subordinate position of everything "social" has already been discussed on the Introduction and earlier in this Chapter; what matters here is how the relocation planning had to conform to technical reasons and

priorities, which conditioned spatial demarcations and the intensity and frequency of encounters between residents and Yacyretá's agents. Lines drawn following the engineering and economic priorities cut across significant social units: through artificially dividing the neighborhoods, they might separate an old grandmother from her relatives living next door, or a compadre or comadre from the other member of the diad who may reside one or two houses away. They also disorganize community life where it had existed.

Certain types of encounters, such as those generated by the 1979 Census and the Swap Operation, which will be discussed in the next chapter, occurred between every household and Yacyretá's employees; other encounters were limited to those included in the first stage. Not every household pertaining to stage one, maintained the same kind of contacts with the EBY; various factors contributed to differences in communicational exchanges. The effects of the 1983 floods, legal problems with the deeds, and changing priorities in engineering needs, produced a very curious pattern of relocation where whole blocks were moved except for one or two houses left in isolation surrounded by barren spaces, gigantic dynamite holes, and contaminated puddles.

Given the impossibility of interviewing the totality of household heads from every affected chacra, I decided to choose chacras representing different experiences with the EBY according to their position in the sequence of

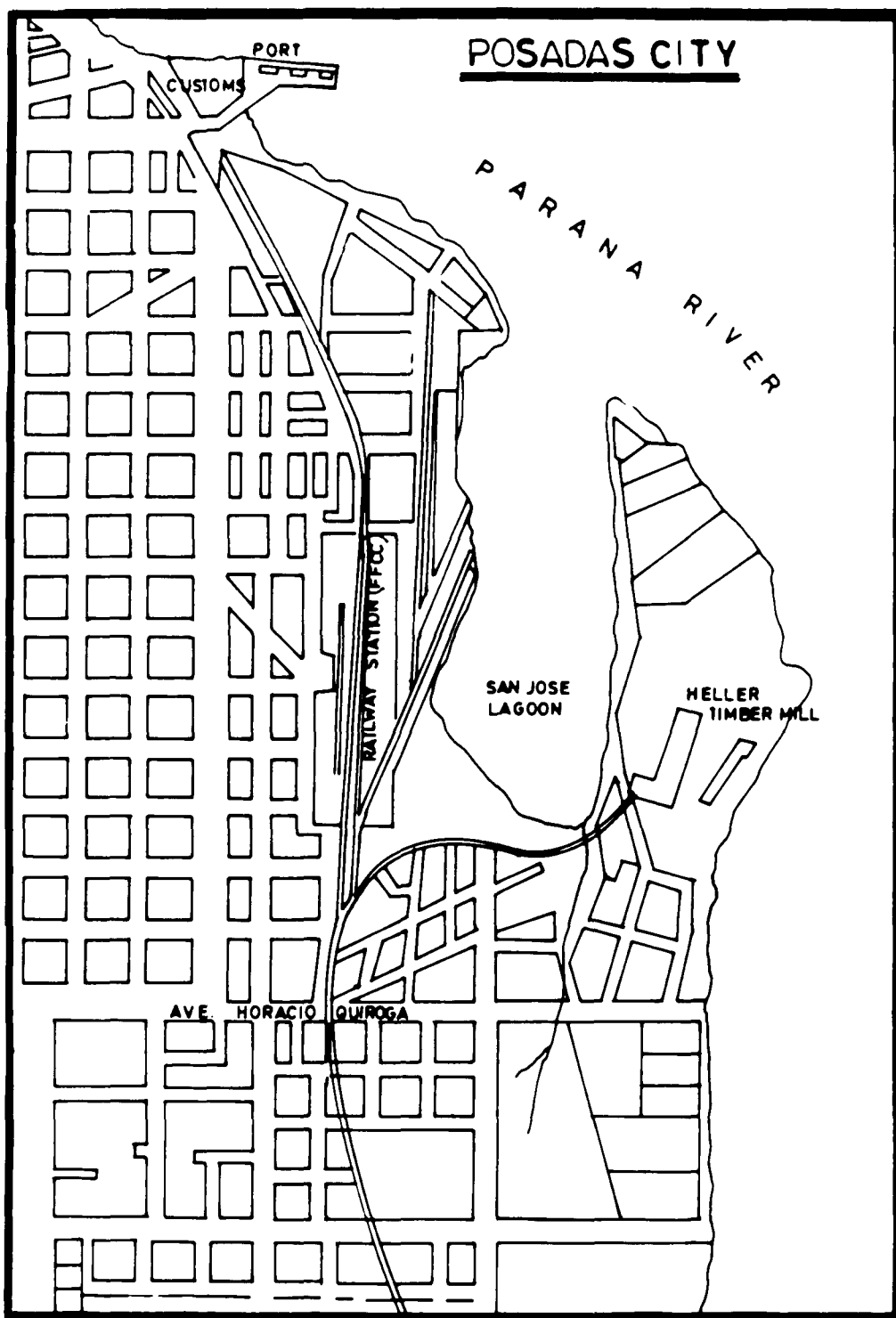
relocation. I will now summarize some characteristics of the selected chacras; they will be more fully described later in the next chapter.

Chacra 206, 209 (El Chaquito, San Cayetano-Villa Coz)

These two chacras of stage (see map 4) one had been partially relocated by the time this study began and changes continued to occur while we were in the field. Each chacra was periodically visited by a social worker and occasionally EBY would summon household heads to its Posadas offices to discuss issues connected with their legal problems.

Chacra 207 (Heller Neighborhood)

This chacra is also part of stage one. Some of the original residents left when they got compensation money or were relocated early. The houses were built through a housing project and are comparatively better than those prevailing in the relocation areas; most of them are made out of bricks as opposed to tin or wood, the dominant materials in the zone. The uniqueness of this sector is that it was used as a transitory residence in special cases: it provided shelter to some families affected by floods and to others that had to leave their houses for engineering needs before their new homes in the relocation sites were finished. Without being planned, it came to be some sort of



MAP 4: "CHACRAS 206,207,209" EL CHAQUITO, HELLER AND SAN CAYETANO

an experimental site where relocation techniques were put into practice. As was the case with the other chacras of stage one, social workers visited the households periodically.

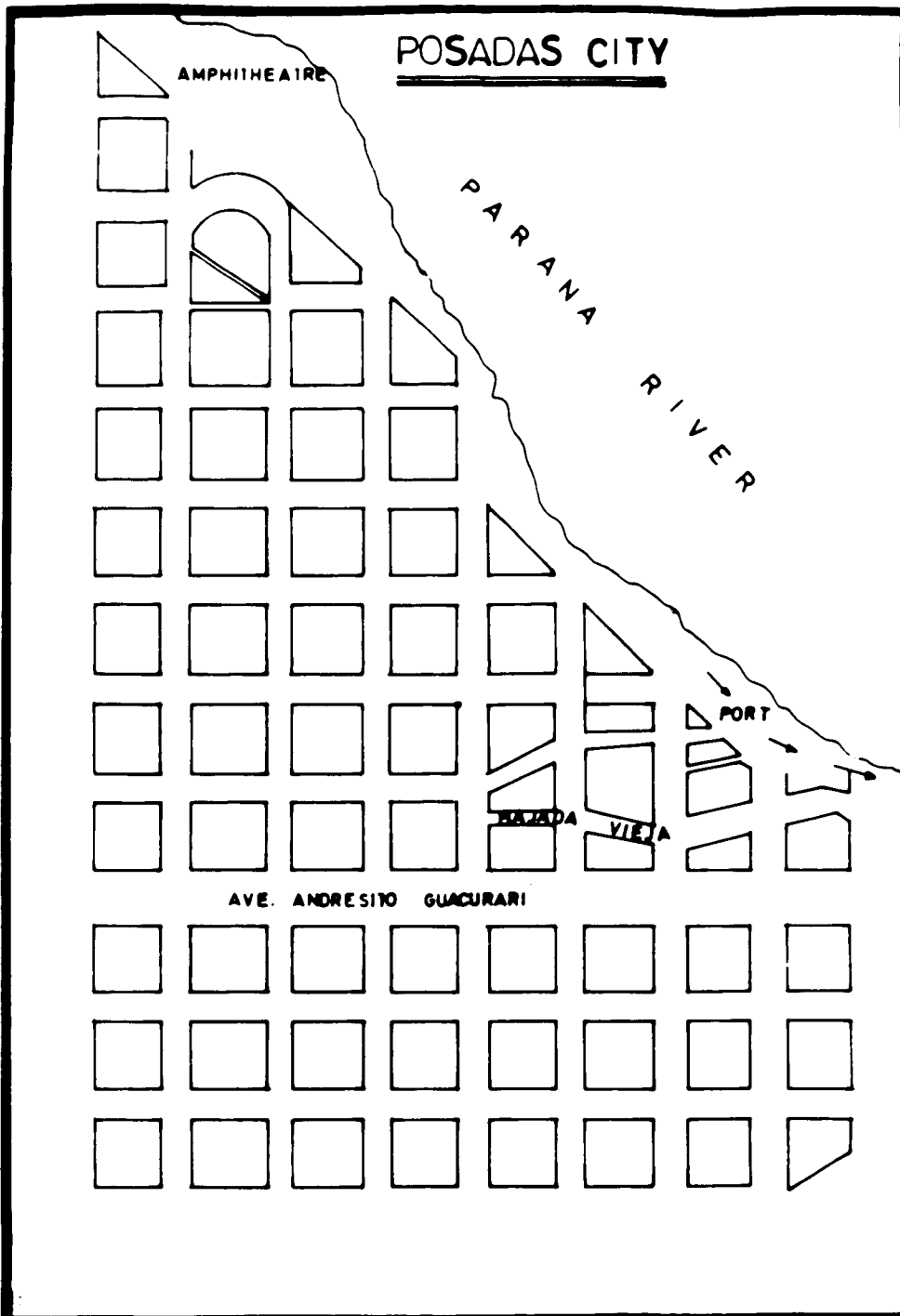
Chacras from "Bajada Vieja" and "Anfiteatro" (Amphitheatre)

These chacras (see map 5) are included in stage two. Like those in stage three, by the time field work was started in 1987, they had been visited by Yacyreta's employees during the initial years of the relocation program (1979-1980). After that, they had sporadic contacts with the EBY when it promoted technical and literacy courses. A few households were also visited in 1985 to verify data from the 1979 Census, to see if there had been changes and to estimate the number of new occupants without relocation rights. EBY's social workers did not visit the area regularly.

Chacra 93

Finally, this chacra represents the last phase of the relocation process. It is one of the resettlement sites hosting the displaced population. Undoubtedly, those living here have maintained the most frequent contacts with Yacyretá's staff.

From each of these chacras, I selected a sample of households heads to interview. I wanted to have both the



MAP 5: BAJADA VIEJA AND AMPHITHEATRE

EBY's categories of proprietors and non-proprietors represented in my sample as well as female and male-headed households. My assistants and I consulted the social worker's records of each household from all these chacras in order to obtain a sample to be interviewed in depth. This endless, time consuming and tiring selection process could have been avoided since a lot of the records did not coincide with what we later found in the field. In the next chapters, I will explore some of the reasons why their data differs from ours. Our work with the records, however, was not a waste of time; on the contrary, it allowed us to do participant observation in Yacyretá's offices quite unobtrusively: we could see people coming to consult the social workers, the interaction of professionals, technicians and employees, and how regular daily work was organized.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ENCOUNTER OF THE RELOCATED POPULATION AND THE RELOCATION AGENCY

The decision to build Yacyretá and the need to move population out of areas that would be affected either by complementary works such as bridges, highways, water works, or by the dam itself, have brought people together who would never have met otherwise and others who were previously involved in various asymmetrical relations such as: patron-client, and capitalist-laborer. In this chapter I will discuss the encounter between the population to be relocated and the various agents who communicated that dam construction would affect their lives. To understand such an encounter, I will first describe where the various actors come from and how they lived before relocation-related actions transformed their daily lives. The description of their past had primarily been constructed on the basis of the accounts of the population that has already experienced the effects of Yacyretá's policies. Consequently, what is stressed in the narratives of the early years in the neighborhood stems from their evaluation of the present situation.

The encounter was not a gratifying one. On the contrary, it marks the beginning of a very critical period in the lives of both the EBY's staff and the people to be relocated, an encounter characterized by anxiety, uncertainty and a rather resigned anticipation. All these are symptoms of Scudder and Colson's "multidimensional stress", the particular state created by compulsory relocation, a notion that has also been used by Yacyretá's social planners. Nobody, however, has seen that the crisis is suffered both by planners and the affected population.

When a crisis situation erupts on everyday life routines, social actors recognize breaking points, time-space boundaries separating a "before" and "after", usually having symbolic or physical markers (Giddens 1984:282). To those affected by Yacyretá's relocation policies, the "census" and the "granting of the blue folder" constitute such dividing devices: They mark the transformation and/or the creation of settings of interaction, social relations, symbols and meanings, as well as the acquisition of new identities, such as becoming "beneficiaries", the "licenciada/o", or "Mr or Mrs Yacyretá".

However, Yacyretá's announcements are not regarded as the sole event that dramatically changed their lives. The tragic floods of 1983 are vividly recalled and blamed for their sufferings, as much, and in many cases, even more, than Yacyretá is. Yacyretá's works and the floods of 1983

account for most of the spatial transformation of Posadas. Throughout the 80s, parts of old neighborhoods disappeared, other spaces were used for transitory relocation, and rows of bright new tile-roofed houses emerged in previously quiet semi-rural environments.

Before seeing how the population interpreted their first encounter and how they elaborated what was told to them, in other words, how they consumed messages and actions, I will describe some aspects of everyday life in the chacras which may provide clues for understanding the population's reactions.

The chacras before the Census

The early history of Bajada Vieja has already been discussed in chapter two. The name refers both to the first street opened to communicate with the port and to a district. There now exists a distinction between the street and the well defined surrounding blocks, and the area spreading down the cliff from the port to the Posadas amphitheatre. Above the cliff, houses are made of bricks and a few are still made out of wood but they all have running water and electricity. Down the cliff, people get water from a public tap. Houses are made of discarded material, cardboard and tin; very few shacks are connected to electrical sources. The dwellings are hidden inside a heavy forest: some cannot be seen from above. There are no streets

running down to the river coast or parallel to it; only a few steps here and there which start on the sides of sightseeing balconies which mark the end of the planned paved streets. The contrast is great: people come to these balconies to see the view of Encarnación and the Paraná river. On both sides of the balconies, there are elegant homes with beautiful cultivated gardens; down to the bottom there are poor shanty homes enclosed by thick subtropical vegetation.

As there are no streets and very few paths, people from the low areas must go through their neighbors' homes to reach their own place. To get to other parts it is even more difficult since some sectors are separated by streams and there are only very unstable little bridges connecting them. Walking along the river banks to get to some of the houses, is only possible when the water level is low enough.

In the past, most of the area belonged to the brothers Tabia. Their firm owned the shipyards in that zone. Don Hilario Gómez, a grocer who used to work for the company as *mita-í* (foreman), commented that "half of Posadas used to belong to them: they helped to create the city...they employed as much as fifty people."

Don Peralta, a worker in the firm helped some men get permission to build their homes inside the property and he also joined men and women when they cleared the field and built their ranchos. That was about thirty years ago. At

that time, old residents recall, "it was a thick jungle and an estero (swamp), full of snakes." ... "it was so muddy, that it felt like soap."

In general, the population distinguishes between private and public land. They prefer to build their homes on public land because they think it is unlikely they would be evicted. Thus, many informants expressed their desire to build their houses in plots reserved for future streets rather than in privately owned sectors. What Ubaldo Delgado did to decide where to build his house, illustrates their strategies:

In order to enter here, I went to (the) Prefecture, to the police station. And they told me, that (the) Prefecture had nothing to do. (They said) That this is a property, it is a property (private property) and they tell me (that) I am inside, I am an intruder. If I am outside, it belongs to the Prefecture, then I was outside the thing. But for more security, I went to know these people of Tabia, and I asked them and we found the map, it is a triangle. We used to be there, in the coast, now we are in the center of the triangle. Carmen: What did Tabia tell you at that time? Ubaldo: Tabia told me, -"go and make it, after all, I know you are going to look after it (the plot)." "What I would not like is if you were an intruder," he said...

Luisa Ríos was originally from Villa Blosset, one of the oldest riverside districts. She moved to Bajada Vieja forty years before. Her plot was not inside of Tabbia's land. In the 40s, there were scattered ranchos which she describes as primitive compared to the existing homes.

Old Posadeños speak in very derogatory terms about the

coastal people, who used to work as changarines (porters) in the port. The poorest from la Bajada Vieja and other coastline areas used small carts to carry the merchandise. Mola, the same person who owned land and business in Posadas and after whom one of the riverine quarters was named, had a company that was in charge of carrying the merchandise from the ships to the coast when there was no port. They used a big carriage with twelve horses.

Subsistence of the population was, and in many cases still is, largely based on the river. In the old days, many men worked as stevedores, loading the freight. When the activities of the port decreased, some retired and others left or turned to the informal sector of the economy. Some still do some odd-jobs in the port. Fishing is another source of income and a means of getting free food for the household. Women use the river to wash clothes both for their families and for others who pay them per load. Smuggling is another important activity which remains unrecorded in all surveys.

Julio's account illustrates the life history of many neighbors:

Carmen: What did you tell me you worked as?

Julio: Maritime worker, navigator, I am retired. I retired 18 years ago. I retired in 1967, there was not anything else to do. The highway started to come. Everybody, those who deliver the merchandise by surface, it is more convenient for them. With only two people, it is enough from here to Buenos Aires, in a day and a half, they are right at your door, therefore, it is more convenient. That killed navigation. There are a lot of maritime

workers who could not retire; all of them left to Buenos Aires. Because over there, there were still boats, here, there is nothing left. A few stayed, and work for the sand ships, with the hope they will be able to retire.

Carmen: Are you from Posadas?

Julio: Yes, I was born in San Ignacio, but I was raised here, Posadeño, and very soon I started to navigate, it was in 1935...Thirty seven years and eight months was my calculation of the years of work before I retired, it was time to do so. Navigation is unrewarding, because the sailor loses all the affection, even of his lover, because you are never at home. And you arrive one night, and the next day you must go, even if you don't want to. Then, I tell you, it is very painful, because you cannot even be with your wife, not even your family knows you. It is a vagrant life. It is nice for the youth, but when one becomes old, you are bored, you are tired, you are lost night and day. You are never at ease, always in the water. You have no entertainment, nothing. When you arrive in port, they put you "everything red".¹ People want to have fun, and all your money goes. When you realize, you have nothing left in your pocket. It is their fault, they shouldn't bet money. He, who likes to have fun, is not careful. Very few are careful.

Although the Bajada Vieja street is increasingly becoming a tourist attraction and a fashionable place to live some old city residents still think of it as an undesirable area. While the upper part is slowly losing its bad reputation, the low part is still regarded as:

..."truly a favela, where there exists a sector of the population with a strange social organization. They all have their lights, their dancing saloons, many work in the service sector, but a considerable number traditionally work in smuggling, trafficking, they are dangerously tied to smuggling, a lot of marihuana comes through that part (a middle class Posadeño)."

¹ He refers here, to red lights and signs indicating the presence of prostitution houses.

Old men from other quarters affected by the floods still remember when Bajada Vieja was full of piringundines (brothels), bars and dancing places where men could pick women up:

One would go to the bailantas and nobody would say anything because it was National Territory. It was dangerous, if you didn't know the way you couldn't get where you were going, the lights went out at 12 pm.

El Chaquito, San Cayetano, Villa Coz and Heller

Neither the people living in El Chaquito, nor most of the Posadeños know where the quarter got the name from. Some suggest it is because the majority of the first residents were Paraguayans and a large number of them were veterans from the Chaco-Paraguayan War. When the war was over, extremely poor Paraguayans migrated en mass to Argentina looking for better living conditions or escaping from political persecution which became very severe after General Stroessner seized power.

I interviewed people who claimed to have lived in the surroundings since they were born, and whose parents were the first settlers of the area. Doña Damasia came from Paraguay in 1936. She and her family first settled on the coast, the favored area for occupation during those early years. Its convenience was based on two factors: First, it was next to the river, a major means of subsistence; second it had no owner because it was a very floodable sector. When

they subdivided large extensions of land to sell them in installments, her family bought some plots and moved a little inland and higher to El Chaquito, where she maintained her peasant way of life. She woke up at five in the morning to cultivate her vegetables, to milk her cows, make cheese for her household and for sale in the city market. While she was busy with her small farm chores and five children, her husband worked as a sailor, on ships making the journey to the Upper Paraná River. Born in Paraguay at the turn of the century, don Cortés came to Argentina as a child and later became an Argentine citizen. He had always worked in activities related to the port.

Every account of the early days of any quarter starts in the same way. In the beginning, it was all monte, impenetrable monte. Residents told me that before the Heller factory was built in the 40s, it was all "swamps, weeds and guava trees." Barthe, one of the first merchants to arrive to the old Trincheras de San José and who made his fortune through the control of various firms related to the river economy, used to have ship repair shops in the zone later owned by Heller. Although most of the accounts refer to a wild swamp before the factory was inaugurated, and some even mention the existence of lots of yacarés (a kind of alligator) which they used to hunt, there were some activities along the coast that were well established long before the 40s. These included the ferryboat and some

sawmills.

Villa Coz is next to El Chaquito. The name was formed with the initials of the original owner, don Carlos Ovidio Zayas (C.O.Z). He also owned part of what later became San Cayetano, one of the latest settlements in this sector of Posadas. El Chaquito and San Cayetano were separated by Avenue Quiroga, the Avenue following Mitre.

There seems to be no clear-cut distinction between Villa Coz and San Cayetano. Many think both chacras 208 and 209 were called Villa Coz before the San Cayetano Church was built and that soon after that everybody started to refer to the area with the Church's name. To others, each chacra was a different neighborhood: Chacra 208 next to the river and the cold-storage plant was Villa Coz, and Chacra 209 was San Cayetano. Next to the Heller factory, there used to be rows of houses constructed, according to some versions, by the National Mortgage Bank. Some EBY staff members do not believe the Bank built those houses arguing that a national institution could have never financed a housing project in a floodable area. These opposed views do have policy implications. They can influence decisions made with regard to compensation values.

Monetary considerations apart, the Heller housing project seems to have been originally allotted to the political clients of the Peronist party. Those who lived there from the very beginning comment they were "lucky they

got the houses a little before Perón's fall." They stress that many important authorities from Buenos Aires had come to the inauguration of the neighborhood. A Peronist woman, who remarks that they obtained the houses during the Peronist government "which gave so many possibilities to the middle class" kept the foundation stone in her backyard. The fate of this stone is also the preoccupation of an old neighbor who is now living in Chacra 93; he wonders where the stone is while telling me that the Heller neighborhood was first called "Eva Perón" but was immediately changed after the Revolution of 1955. This was not the only transformation they witnessed during those days: trucks loaded with armed men would come, harass them and threatened to burn the homes; moreover, sympathizers of the victorious group razed every symbol of the previous regime. They were not totally successful however, Peronists hid as many things as they could at their personal risk, the case of the stone is an example among many.

The Heller factory, built in the early forties had its own port and there was a railway siding made specially to connect the coastal installations with the railway. At its peak, it employed as much as four hundred people. The main factory made plywood and there was also a sawmill which used the discarded wood.

Don Farias, an old *correligionario*², who claims to be a

² Fellow supporter of the Radical party.

former owner of some land in El Chaquito as well as an administrator at Heller for two years, describes the beginnings of unionization in a manner that illustrates anti-Peronist biases. He commented that when the Law of Professional Associations was passed in the late 40s, workers joined the newly formed Union; they were "very active and insolent," they "would do all kinds of things." He continued saying that Peronism "complicated people's life, they became arrogant, nobody respected or complied with anything." And finally, he complained that "they wanted all rights and no obligations." He remembers a very long strike before 1950 in which workers opposed the firing of undocumented Paraguayans and demanded they were hired again. He speaks very derogatorily of Paraguayans who, according to his view, make for the majority of the riverside people and thinks they should not be given a home because once "they have it they bring all the family."

Animosity against Paraguayans is not uncommon in the neighborhoods, although many "Argentine" residents could have easily been born in Paraguay. Indeed, in most cases it was totally fortuitous the country people were born in as a great number of the inhabitants of the region move constantly from one country to the other in response to changing political and economic conditions. Among those born in Paraguay, some expressed their preference for the Argentine nationality and asserted they felt more Argentine

than many who were born there.

In all neighborhoods conflicts might arise with regards to national identity, rivalries among political factions and soccer. Soccer games were an arena where neighborhood rivalries were played out. El Chaquito and San Cayetano confronted each other in the field and invariably, most of the games ended in fights: "Before it was tough, because I could not go beyond Mitre, well, there it was Quiroga Avenue. When there was a championship, there were big fights and I could not go across the street. Every neighborhood rivaled with each other and very often the police had to send men to put an end to the disputes: "there were some tough people too, don't think that they were all beautiful people, no, Chaquito was at one time respected, it was very much respected."

Soccer teams were sponsored by the owners of groceries which had adjoining bars. The grocers played an important role in community life. Residents could get goods from the store on credit. Each sale was registered on libretas (little booklets) and people could pay for their debts monthly or whenever they obtained enough money. Some of the groceries had a dance floor which on week-ends got crowded with all kinds of people. Men belonging to the grocery barra (clique, band) met women who worked as domestic servants during the week. Drafted men from the various armed forces would also come and it was customary that many of the dances

ended in brawls.

The grocer generally acted as a broker with the larger society. He could be a labor contractor, recruiting his soccer players and other clients for various odd-jobs. In addition, he assured a political clientele to the faction he belonged to. These stores were places from which great social control could be exerted. Men would spend most of their time drinking, playing cards, boccie, billiards, taba (knucklebones), and gambling. Most of the movement and gossiping of the neighborhood was controlled from these places.

A man who used to own one of these stores, told me that he used to be the President of the Soccer Club which got to have six teams. He proudly said that on one occasion, he ordered all the team shirts from Paraguay: "they looked exactly like those of the National Selection and Customs let me pass them." One day, he commented me that he knew everybody in the neighborhood and their whereabouts; "nobody can fool me," he added.

The grocer was also somebody the client could rely on in difficult times. The first important strike after the Revolution of 1955 was one led by railroad workers. One of my informants had to hide for days because the police searched his home daily. The governor tried to cut supplies from the strikers but the grocer from whom he always brought the staples told him and his friends they could take all

they needed, including money; "it is something," he said, "we always have to be thankful for."

The Church rivaled with the grocers for the control of a large client population. It also organized soccer games both for adults and children, held dances and sponsored various social activities on occasion of religious festivities. The most important was the procession on August 7, in honor of San Cayetano, the patron of workers. The importance of this festivity was reinforced by the presence of a lot of outsiders, specially those from the "center."

When the "missionary fathers" first came to the area, there was no Church and they used to hold mass in a tent. Shortly afterwards, they moved to a wooden chapel. Father Segismundo, who is now chaplain of the army, was very active in organizing the community to build a new Church. They collected money through organizing various activities such as raffles, charity fairs and dances. Everybody was very proud of their accomplishment and insistently remarked that the Church was erected with all their effort, with "the sweat of workers." Another neighbor pointed that it was only neighbors that did it, there was "no Municipality, no government, nothing."

The Church, people from San Cayetano believe, helped them understand each other and was "fundamental to our being more united." The following summarizes what the Church meant to most neighbors:

For us, the Church was everything, we were all for the Church, the whole neighborhood...Because there, all the neighborhood used to gather, in the Church. There, they organized charity fairs, there was a soccer field, the kids had fun there. Then, of course, on Sundays, the masses, there it was based, around the Church, the whole neighborhood was based...

The Church assumed a role of moral guidance, it set the standards of what families should be like. An old woman pointed that the fathers "did a lot because they married all the couples, nearly all the couples in the neighborhood."³ The priest had a paternalistic relationship with his parishioners: "he was very good because he took care of all the people and helped them a lot."

First encounter: the Census

While the first encounter between the population to be relocated and EBy was through the Census, my first interaction with the displaced ten years later dealt with their accounts on that turning point of their lives. On our first visit to the chacras, we told household heads and/or other family members that we were coming from the University and were interested in writing a history of the neighborhoods, what they were like in the past and how they changed after the decision to build Yacyretá was made. Different questions were addressed to us to check where we

³ It is interesting to note how it was said in Spanish: "hicieron mucho porque se casó a los matrimonios, a casi todos los matrimonios del barrio."

came from and what our purpose was. In one house, after explaining our purpose for the second time, a woman expressed her approval and her daughter yelled jokingly from the kitchen: "you are going to be in the history books like San Martín". As a rule, people were willing to talk about these topics and would speak about them at ease. Many, however, did not want us to tape their accounts and we did not insist on this matter. Although field work was done under a democratic government, the initial contact between the people to be resettled and Yacyretá occurred under a very repressive military regime and the population in general-and not solely the people to be relocated- were still very afraid of having their opinions recorded in a manner where they could be easily identified. In addition, there were a few informants who believed that the EBY punishes those critical of its proceedings, either by postponing their resettlement or by giving them smaller homes. This group did not want us to work with a tape recorder because they feared their statements could reach Yacyretá. Not everybody was so much concerned with anonymity, many insisted that their names be mentioned when I write about those issues; they understood that everybody must know what happened to them and what they think about it. Don Ramirez asked if what he was saying would be told to the general public, because he believed it was important that people know what had happened with Yacyretá, how they

treated the people: "What I tell you anybody can tell. I do no lie, neither do I exaggerate, things are like they are, and it is good they be known."

In the following sections, I let the relocated people speak for themselves to recreate how they dramatically lived their first encounter:

Voices from the Bajada Vieja and Amphitheatre

Pedro is in his late 60s, he retired as a navigator because of an accident which left him crippled. He feels very lonely because all his children have left home and his wife died. He has not been visited very often by EBY's staff and his understanding about the relocation process is very vague.

Nancy:...when was the first time that you were in contact with people from Yacyretá?

Pedro: It's been... many years ago of that. I could not say it exactly but, it was probably in 1977, I can't remember it so...It's been a long time ago.

Nancy: What would they tell you?

Pedro: That this couldn't...that it was not allowed to innovar⁴ (make changes). In other words, that houses could not be built, and the one who left, could not return. It was because of the dam that was to emerge (salir). And then, they came, and in another opportunity they returned...They did Census. That was in 79,80 (1979,1980). They always came to see, to see how the floors⁵ were, because there were always

⁴ He refers to the Law of Statu Quo passed in 1974.

⁵ The informant is referring to municipal and other government officials who visit the household when floods occur and check if the floors of the houses had been damaged. Most houses only have earth floors which become very muddy as soon as the areas are inundated. If the homes are seriously damaged, household members are temporarily

floods, but it was not big, no. They (the floods) always bothered the people, and the people had to bother the authority, where he is, if not...It is communicated. But I never bothered them, we always went up the cliff. I would erect a little place (where we stayed) until the water lowered. But many could not do so, because they did not have the means to do so. Civil Defence (employees) came to see the situation. They had to bother. The trucks from the municipality would come to take them. And after it was over, they would come to check if the place was in good condition to bring him back here. But that flood of 82 (1982)...there it was lost. But they went out (salieron), but many lost...

Nancy:...And how did you feel about the idea of leaving the neighborhood where you have lived for so long?

Pedro: And as...that came, that idea came because of the dam because afterwards it is going to sweep over everything, this is going to remain under water. The mirror of Ituzaingó⁶, the dam...but this...is going to inundate that where they are going to erect the dam here. Here in Encarnación⁷ our low zone is going to be under water and this is a great mirror of water that is going to make...the coastal area is going to be under water: Prefecture; a little more up there, the port. And so, these things, everything is going to be under water.

Juana, another neighbor, said that some years before, "those from Yacyretá came, a girl and two guys, they measured the home, they asked how many they were in the family and then, they gave them a folder that she still

taken to special shelters.

⁶ Many newspaper articles and leaflets promoting Yacyretá spoke of the dam as a "mirror of water." Ituzaingó is the Argentine town close to the site where the engineering works are done. It is also the location where workers, technicians and professionals live. The informant fused both meanings into a single one.

⁷ Pedro speaks of Encarnación, the Paraguayan city which will also be flooded, as if it were the same thing as Posadas.

keeps. She added that they told her that "water would catch her". Alike Juana, Vicente also remembers that they asked him how much money they made and how many there were in his family. He, the same as his neighbors, says he knew about Yacyretá through the Census: "seven or eight years before". Nobody is very sure about the year. Brígido said he could not remember well, but that it was during the military government, in 1977 or 1978. Ramón placed that initial encounter in 1974 or 1975. The two, as the majority of the neighbors immediately added after mentioning the Census, commented either that "they were then given the folder" or "that they had one". Indalecio complains: "A long time ago they promised us they would give us a house and nothing happened, we were censused about four times."

Ramón, Juana, Julio, Brígido refer to various visits. They also remember what Yacyretá offered to them:

Juana: The guys that come to take notes do not know anything and they tell (you) that this will take long and who knows when they will be given. The only thing they do, is to write down how many members there are in the family, how many children, the money we have, the meters of the lot (plot) to see the size of the house.

Brígido:...These people returned twice...They offered us different places to go to live, like the area of the Regimiento (Regiment) and Coca-Cola, but I preferred the zone of Itaembé.⁸ They came afterwards to see if I still wanted to go there and I said yes.

⁸ The areas Brígido mentions are sectors of the city where the Municipal authorities temporarily resettled the families who lost their homes with the floods of 1983.

Julio: Here, we had visits from them many times. There was a time, nearly a month, two months, three or four would come. I had a little grocery store...and they would drink a beer, a soft drink, and begin to talk. I started to ask, as I am curious, what is this business about?

Carmen: What did they tell you?

Julio: They said that this was fast (that the dam would be done in a short time). He (an EBY employee) says, "this is going to happen!" And I say "What is going to happen to us." And they assured that they were going to give a place to whoever wants one and those who don't want one, will get compensation. The plot will be assessed, the property will be assessed, and you will be paid. And I say, "but with (the amount of) money that you are going to give me, I cannot do anything."

Voices from El Chaquito and San Cayetano

Like the neighbors at la Bajada Vieja, there are a lot of neighbors at El Chaquito and San Cayetano who are uncertain on the year they first heard from Yacyretá. Above, Braulio the son of a 66 year old widow registered as the household head, gave us his view on when and how they got the news. Unlike those living in Bajada Vieja, residents in these neighborhoods understand that there had been more than one Census.

Braulio: Yes, that was when... that, I do not remember well, in..., but it seems to me that it was in 1980, when they made the 1980 Census. It seems to me that it was then that they gave the news that we had to go from here. And people do not give much importance to it. You see, because I do not know. You know how they are...politics. They know that everything is politics, people do not give a... And then, it started to mobilize here, around the business of the bridge, you see. But, that I know that this appeared..., more or less, I remember that it was in 1980, in the Census, and there, it was started, the talk about Yacyretá. Because in 1978, I remember, when the

World Cup came, I was near 2 de Mayo, around that zone and nothing had happened yet. It was after I came here...and with the business of the Census, that they left those little labels at each house, you see, censused and what do I know?. People did not give a dam.

Felisa is a 50 year old woman who lives in San Cayetano with her companion; their son, daughter in law and grand child. She is not legally married and the property is under her name. She commented that she had never heard of Yacyretá until they had taken the 1979 Censuses and then added that she still did not know "What is that business about a dam". As most of the people interviewed, she remembered that they took a picture of the house; that they then asked how many there were, whether the house belonged to them or not, and if they had a sales contract.

Casimiro of El Chaquito, father of ten children and grandfather of three is in his 50s and occasionally works recruiting labor for the railroad or for other transitory chores. He recalls that: "First, a Census came...we were given the folder. And they told us from Yacyretá that we were within the statu quo law...At the beginning, we didn't believe, but when the second Census came, then, we did."

Julio González is the household head, but I interviewed his wife because he worked all day and was very hard to find him at home. Dora is in charge of doing all the errands. They have five children, and although in their early

forties, they already have two grandchildren. Before telling me any other thing about the first time she met the Yacyretá people, she called them *sinvergüenzas* (shameless ones):

Dora: In 1979, it was the first Census... and they said that they were going to take us out. They told this to everybody they took a census of and said that it was "direct swap"... That nobody was going to lose anything, they took the picture of the house, and they gave us the folder with the picture of the front.

Carmen: Who did that?

Dora: Well, employers, those who took the pictures would come, they didn't have an important position,...they were sent by the others. They looked at the roof, the walls, the trees. They said they would pay for everything...When they took the Census, they said that we went (into) direct swap...that whoever had a plot, there was no problem, that they changed it for another house, that they changed right.⁹

Adolfo, a 49 year old man who now makes bread and pastries for a living made some remarks that the others did not. According to him, in 1968 or 1970, there were already some news about the plans of constructing a dam. During those days, approximately nineteen years before, he commented, it was said that there would be no more fuel in 40 years. He shows to be better informed than others and it is obvious that he read the papers discussing the project.¹⁰

Evaristo, a retired 70 year old man who fathered 11 children, did not mention the Census, but rather, a

⁹ Informants used "cambio directo" and "cambio derecho" interchangeably. It will appear as direct swap.

¹⁰ See chapter three to see how the press discussed the need of hydroelectric projects to meet energy demands which could not be met once the oil crisis erupted.

measurement taken in 1977.

An active member of the Comisión Vecinal of El Chaquito (a neighborhood commission), Domingo talked extensively about the community's problems. Most of what he told me, he also reported to the press, the local authorities, political parties and to the EBY. It is not surprising that he is one of the few persons that refers to past events related to Yacyretá's history other than the Census:

Domingo: The works, we knew they would be made during the Peronist government of 1973. It reached an agreement with the Paraguayan government to construct this dam...If we have deeds it goes for a direct swap, if we do not present the deed in time and form, we will have to pay all of it. And there are neighbors that have been paying taxes for nearly 30 years, who are paying taxes, 30 years...

The first time I visited José Ríos at El Chaquito, it was a hot Sunday afternoon. He was sitting outside his house drinking mate with his daughters, sons, inlaws and grand children. Except from one house next door all other surrounding houses had already been demolished. From his house, I could see earth mounds, ditches, the ramps they had already erected for the highway leading to customs, and the international bridge. As it looked as if they were having a family reunion, I limited myself to tell them the purpose of my visit and asked don José when I could come back. He said that he would love my coming back because he liked visits and enjoyed talking.

On my second visit, a married daughter who lived in

Barrio Iprodha¹¹, told me that her father would be coming soon, he was fetching some water from the public tap. She commented to me that she was accompanying him because they were having a novena for her mother and that this was the reason why all the family was gathering the Sunday before. Don Ríos was old and a widow; the only company he had was, according to his daughter, a grandson whom he adopted from one of his daughters. He came soon afterwards, carrying two heavy buckets of water. When I asked when he first knew about Yacyretá, he said it was with the Census and went inside the house to bring the blue folder. He checked the date and then asked me to have a look at it. He was registered as an owner. Then, he remembered: "There had been a blank Census, they would give you a little paper. Later, they came and gave us the folder."

Nobody in Bajada Vieja and Anfiteatro had identified the profession and/or names of the Yacyretá people; but both in El Chaquito and San Cayetano all informants mentioned "the licenciada" (titled ones), word by which they address the social workers¹².

¹¹ A dormitory public housing project, 6 km away from downtown Posadas. It was built during the same years Yacyretá was building the Relocation homes.

¹² In Argentina, University students obtain a Licenciata degree after five or six years of study. It is a professional diploma which enables graduates to either teach, do research or work at public or private institutions. In the past, social work schools did not offer a five year program of studies, they granted diplomas of "asistentes sociales" (social assistants) after two or

One of us asked an informant: "Who came from Yacyretá? Do you know any of them? Have you gone there to talk?"; and the informant, a football player and a province employee answered: "no, the licenciada, she came and said -"Look, a census is being taken, afterwards the bridge is going to be open, here, in Posadas-Encarnación.

Voices from Barrio Heller (Chacra 207)

Florencio is a middle aged mechanic who followed the same trajectory of many men in his age group. Born in Misiones rural area, he went to Buenos Aires to try his luck. He wanted to study how to repair cars and he did so for a while but in 1978, he came back, married in 1979 and settled in San Cayetano.

Florencio: Here, in this place...we came two years ago. Because the flood chased us, in 1983, the flood chased us.

Carmen: How did you know about the Yacyretá construction?

Florencio: And I knew about it after I got married. I got to know because in 1980, you see, there was a Census, you remember, that big Census at that time. I got to know because they came to make Census, they took a picture of the houses...previous to that they gave us a croquis similar to this one, just simply a little paper like this one. When the Census came and they took the picture, this picture (he shows it)...And this is from the time I got married. And this was everything. It was then, that they brought a leaflet that said "B₁", "B₂", "B₃."¹³ That group 1,

three years of study.

¹³ He refers to a leaflet describing the stages of relocation E1, E2, E3, which were shown in a map. It also provided examples of the types of houses that were assigned according to family size. House design changed according to the relocation sites A1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.1, A4.

something like that, the first group had to go out(salir), that it had to be taken out(sacar). It was all those people, that was over what was going to be this, the ramps; then, there were people who had deeds and were owners, proprietors of the plot. And the third group, which corresponded to me, it was people who were on public land, in Municipal land, public, the B₃. And they took a lot of people. What was delayed a little was the first group...¹⁴

Doña Teresa, lives with two unmarried children, two married ones, their consorts and two grandchildren. She owns a badly kept brick house which she complains had been ruined with the 1983 floods and could not be fixed because of the law of statu quo. She considered herself part of an impoverished middle class. Her late husband used to work for the Argentine Railroad Company and in 1973 became a **diputado** (representative) of the Peronist party. She said that the idea to construct the dam has been in "the mind of many men for 50 years, but only recently, they started to build it."

Most of the informants, constantly repeated that they "were waiting" when asked about Yacyretá. This is the case of Rubén, a father of five children, who works at the Municipality in the morning and fishes the rest of the day to make ends meet. He says that they had nothing to do "other than waiting". He first heard "comments" (gossip) in his neighborhood, chacra 210, but in a very "superficial manner"; he acquired a "greater knowledge when those from

¹⁴ The categories he uses do not correspond to any of EBY's official stages.

Yacyretá took a Census in 1979." He then said again that he knew about the dam through comments, but that he still did not know what a dam is.

On another visit, Florencio said that they had twice come to his house but they did not find him because he was in Buenos Aires. He then added that he was lucky they had found him the third time because "those 'social visitors' went three times to each house and if you were not there, there was not anything you could do." After commenting this, he asked his wife to bring a supporting document saying that on May 26th, 1979 they had taken the Census at his house.

Dominga was waiting for her husband to come for lunch in a short while so she could not be extensively interviewed on this visit. However, we sat in the patio and chatted for a while: "You see, -she said-, they would give me another house, so I knew they wouldn't leave me on my own (en banda)."

Susana used to rent the house where she lived before moving to Barrio Heller. When they came to take the Census, she identified herself as the household head. At that time she was living with Gerónimo, ten years younger than her and with three children, each of them with a different last name. The youngest was the son of her present partner. She admitted to have been rather concerned when she first heard the news and that they would ask the EBY's people what they were going to do with them. They later felt relieved when

they were "given the folder" and were told that "nobody would be left in the street."

Maria del Carmen, don Ramírez companion, was watching a soap opera when one of my assistants arrived. She invited her inside the house and told her they used to live in another neighborhood but she temporarily moved when they lost their house with the 1983 flood. She complained that the situation was now very different from the beginning because they initially said they would have a house which could be paid in "affordable installments." She repeated these last words several times. She then explained that in the beginning there were two options: Money or a house in exchange for the one they had. As her house was lost with the floods, she bitterly complained, she now would have to pay for the new one.

At Barrio Heller, they remember one of the social workers by name; one of the neighbors stresses that "she has even come to our house a few times." They also mention a lawyer, but not by name; the engineer Pérez, "the boss"; and a male social worker, García.

Barrio Yacyretá (Chacra 93)

Doña Soledad and her husband came from Paraguay in the 40s. At that time, they had a little son and they had to work hard to become owners of the house. She worked as a washerwoman and also grew a lot of vegetables and raised some chicken in the backyard. One of my assistants, Susana,

asked her if she could remember when they knew about

Yacyretá:

Soledad: No, and they come and say that everything must go, that it will be under water.

Susana: Did people from Yacyretá come?

Soledad: Yes.

Susana: Do you remember who came?

Soledad: No, I don't remember. Then, the...I don't remember the name... and well, they said that we must go and we say it is impossible, how are we going to go? That we are inside our ranchito (little hut) that we got¹⁵ with a lot of work...Just enough to buy a hut (rancho) and we bought a hut like a wagon, like this, very low, and after that...we kept building it little by little...then they came and began to say that we must go because we will be under water. Under force we have to go and well, my late husband accepted it.

Susana: And what did people say in the neighborhood?

Soledad: And nobody...Nothing, because we are going to tell you, frankly, they are all ignorant, there is nobody who is going to say that we cannot go. And that is how things are, and then we accepted. All of us accepted. And those who own the house, they would have direct swap.

In general, residents of chacra 93 recall the first news about Yacyretá as a positive event. They took Ramona by surprise; being born and raised in the neighborhood, she received the announcement with happiness because they told them "it would be a total change in their life, the house, everything." According to her, it was a happy thing, as she had always had a very "precarious little wooden house" and

¹⁵ In Spanish the informant said "procuramos" (procured), implying a great effort to accomplish the goal of having a house, which may include from borrowing money to obtaining discarded materials from different patrons to make improvements. It implies that they had to mobilize their social networks and develop special strategies.

the change, she repeated, was a very "happy thing."

The re-construction of their past history with Yacyretá seems to include more censuses and more visits. They describe the "counting procedures" in more detail. Specially, they seem to be more aware of what data the EBY wanted and what it was for:

First encounters as seen from Yacyretá's staff members

Anybody listening to Yacyretá's staff accounts of the first encounter with the population, would have some difficulties to discern the various actions they refer to. I interviewed present and former members from the various sectors to see what they recalled. At the time of my field work, the EBY in Posadas was divided as follows:

With the exception of some of the lawyers, who are famous for being inaccessible as I shall discuss on chapter six, the rest of the EBY's staff had been friendly and open to my queries. The following comments are an example of what they reported to me about their initial participation:

Juan: Finally, the EBY attempts a timid rapprochement with the social scientists from the University. It consisted in asking us to do a study. It was clear that the Census from 1975, even though it had a lot of tables and many volumes, it lacked a humanistic, historical, anthropological dimension showing how people really lived. It was very hard to imagine and generate a relocation project based on the existing data; it was basically data of a sociodemographic kind. What then happened is that they asked us to do a study, given the fact the initial housing plan was considered inadequate; this problem probably being attributed to the use

of inappropriate census data gathering techniques. This study was some sort of a letter of introduction, its purpose was basically the description of ways of life, quality of life...it had a lot of photographs. It was called "Housing and labor in the areas affected by Yacyretá." It included a lot of things: temporary labor, the study of porters, labor demand...It aimed at looking how to compensate the impact of relocation on their sources of labor. Our study was phenomenal. We had to do it in two weeks, with four or five teams working simultaneously. A lot of students participated because we were very few teachers. They took a photography class to get those pictures. And then, people from Misiones appeared producing something impressive. people appeared, those who up until then had only been comments, statistics. Suddenly, the pictures appear, the house plans...like something tangible, absolutely carne y hueso (flesh and bones)¹⁶, in comparison to the previous study...In Yacyretá, I started with a rather complex operation, in its logistics, its organization. It consisted in changing the supporting document given in the 1975 census, for a luxurious plastic folder with some sort of a location certificate, with a water mark...like bonds, with a polaroid picture of the house. Then, each of the three, four thousand households beneath the security level were given one of those folders. This lasted for months. This was my initial task, we had to plan a massive entrance to the field, with a fairly large group of people. We went with pick-ups provided with loudspeakers. Field workers called people by their names and they would come and receive the blue folders.

There is no general agreement whether there had been one or two Censuses before the 1979 EBY. Neither do EBY's staff members know for sure what institution was in charge of them. What everybody agrees on is that they were inappropriate instruments to develop resettlement policies. One of the major problems with the 1977 Census is that

¹⁶ Completely human

because it was taken before establishing the definitive level, it included a greater area than the one effectively affected. Somebody from Yacyretá commented me that even if they had wanted to use some of the data it would be impossible to do so because rats had a feast with the protocols. The Argentine Navy, which was said to be in charge of data processing kept, them in its deposits in Buenos Aires docks, universally known for its overpopulation of rodents.

Although they acknowledged many problems with the 1977 Census, the EBY employed the same cartography for the 1979 Census. It also incorporated into the resettlement files the data they could recover from Buenos Aires port.

Members of the social team remembered that the 1979 Census and the Swap Operation were done simultaneously. Some of them refer to both by using the word census. A sociologist was in charge of the Census and an anthropologist coordinated the Swap Operation. The majority of the field assistants doing the Census were students in Social Anthropology, Social Work and on Social Science Research Techniques. By en large, the Swap Operation was in charge of social workers. All of them did their work on short term contracts with the Consultant Firm. Everybody remembers that at one point, there were more than eighty people working in their sector. In Posadas, both actions were coordinated by an anthropologist who was responsible of

the PRAS.

A social worker who participated in every stage of the project recalled that they started the Swap Operation by leaving pamphlets in the whole area. That was made only once arguing that there were a lot of people who could not read and did not know what it was. They used loudspeakers to replace the leaflets. Liliana, one of the social workers, told me that while she was on the field, registering some data, neighbors would approach her to ask when this would come out(salir). They had to take courses to participate in the operation; among various things, they discussed what to tell to the population.

Many at Yacyretá believe that the idea of giving the blue folder was a mistake:

It was the idea of De los Rios, the Director of the Legal area, He had seen this in Spain. But you can do this when the beneficiary is defined. Here, the problem is that there are a lot of people with a folder who are not beneficiaries. Even though it says in small letters that it does not grant the condition of beneficiary, people understand it does. In other words, initially, the supporting document from 1977 was changed for a folder. Then, it was enlarged when it was realized that reality had little to do with the Census 1977. It was a useless operation.

After finishing these operations which lasted for many months, social workers started working house by house, in the neighborhoods corresponding to stage one. Each social worker had a zone. Their supervisor did the zoning. At that time, as the registers elaborated on the basis of the 1979

Census were not finished, the social workers did not know how many people there were in each chacra and had to check this in the field. Dora remembers:

We visited the houses periodically. At that time we were a lot. We visited each family every fortnight. Besides getting information, we gave them advice on what they needed. For example, documents, we would tell them what they had to get. We got preferential appointments. There were a lot of people without documents...it was a significant number...There were a lot of six year old kids that had been born...and the mother was with the "pink paper"¹⁷. We arranged contacts with the register office (registro civil), with Migrations. In general, they considered us...At the time of the milicos¹⁸ everybody are soldiers...now, (regretfully) they are all captains. Even the (pinche) minor office clerk behind the counter...

Written voices and the interpreter's voice

So far, we have heard the accounts of the first encounters as told by Yacyretá's staff and by people in the neighborhoods. Both reconstructions of these past events were mediated by: my selection, organization, and ordering of voices; brief descriptions of characters, comments and interpretations to facilitate the understanding of the plurality of voices.

I will now reconstruct events through the use of written records such as newspapers articles, reports,

¹⁷ When a baby is born the hospital registers the basic data about the birth on a form which is then taken to the civil register(register office?).

¹⁸ Slang word used to refer to the Military, it has a derogatory connotation.

memorandums and various studies. In the last section of this chapter, I will include how I see this first encounter.

What follows is a summary of the major actions done in the early years of the Yacyretá project. It includes their purpose, participants, geographical areas, and socio-economic categories they surveyed.

Study of a Sample: August 1975. The sample included 1,068 people, 914 of which resided in Posadas. It registered demographic information, including the analysis of time of residence in the area, labor and income and family size data. In addition, researchers analyzed the affected population opinion and attitudes towards the project. It was done by a Consultant firm. It included the analysis of some affected areas in Corrientes. There is no information on who did the fieldwork.¹⁹

Register of Population and Housing: March 1977. It surveyed the characteristics of the houses and household members in the affected areas. This study registered 4572 houses, inhabited by a total of 18,440 people.²⁰

Census of Population, Housing and Economic Activities: April

¹⁹ Some results are published on the following reports: Comisión Mixta Técnica Paraguay Argentina de Yacyretá-Apipé. Necesidades Habitacionales de la Población Afectada por el Embalse en Posadas. Posadas 1977; Entidad Binacional Yacyretá. Estudio de la Población en el Area Afectada por las Obras del Proyecto Yacyretá-Apipé, Lado Argentino. Posadas 1975

²⁰ For details on this study consult: Entidad Binacional Yacyretá. Síntesis del Registro de Población y Viviendas Afectadas por el Embalse, Lado Argentino. Julio 1978

to september, 1979. The EBY-Posadas was responsible for designing and taking the 1979 Census. The SIDP, a section of the PRAS conducted this action. The goal of the Census was to "identify both spatially and socially all families and people living in the area below the future lake level in the urban sector of Posadas. It registered both proprietors and non-proprietors. It aimed at getting as much information as possible to orient policy making. University students were hired to do the fieldwork. In the Introduction of the published results, the Director of the Program says:

From the analysis executed on this report, emerges a socioeconomic profile, characterized by a young population component with a high potential for growth. This sector is inserted in a way that although it seems to be marginal, it is highly functional to the fragile labor market of a city lacking important industrial activities. The low average income, occupational instability and a depressed standard of life in comparison to the local media, do not authorize, to qualify the majority of the population as "marginal". Thus, a more careful analysis allows to detect a potential of economic growth and social improvement, on which the Relocation Program of the Entity is based (EBY 1981:ii).

Swap Operation: 1979-1983. Initially, it consisted in giving a folder containing data on the beneficiary's household in exchange of the supporting document granted to each household head interviewed with the 1977 Census. When it was decided to establish 1979 as the top date to grant the condition of "beneficiary", people who had not been registered in the 1977 also received a folder (EBY 1987:25). Social Workers were in charge of it and it was supervised by

an anthropologist. It lasted until 1983.

Social Worker's visits: From 1980 to the present. Social workers periodically visited households included in Stage one. They were in charge of various social plans:

Regularization of Documents, Granting of Permanent Residency to Foreigners (Radicación), Vaccination, Literacy Programs and Labor Training.

Surveyors visits: From 1980 to the present. Surveyors were in charge of measuring, registering, and mapping the plots, buildings, fences and any other thing attached to the soil. They estimated the cost of the property. Appraisers coming from Buenos Aires set the final value. They did a technical work and kept all information in individual folders in the EBY.

Visits of Field Assistants of the SIDP: Those in charge of analyzing and keeping the records of the 1979 Census go to the households to confirm and update information.

Study on Means of Subsistence and Household Ability to Pay (MESUBS): 1981-1982. Three researchers from the UNaM, a sociologist, an anthropologist and a social worker conducted a study at the request of the EBY. The population studied was a sample of squatters to be relocated by Yacyretá on Stage one. I was the anthropologist of that team. We supervised the work of 20 field assistants who did in depth interviews for 6 months. The assistants were University students.

Urban Settlement Verification: 1985. This study was coordinated by the SIDP and was done together with the UNaM. Students in social sciences participated as field assistants. It aimed at verifying changes in the settlement patterns in the affected areas. It checked both households that were no longer in the area and new ones that settled after 1979. Two present major problems of the relocation project were assessed with this study: the existence of 1190 homes of "intruders", plus 416 "derived households" (those which generated out of the original ones as a logical outcome of the life cycle of families). Both situations do not have a proposed solution yet and they are heatedly debated issues among decision makers in Misiones Province.

All the various actions described above have brought various persons together who related to each other in accordance to social positions they had before these initial encounters. We will now examine their past experiences to see how the existing social arrangements might have impinged upon the new ones created because of the dam construction.

Life in the Neighborhoods Before and After the Census as I See It.

In the previous sections I reconstructed the dramatic encounter as it is recalled by the different actors involved. I reported such critical moment by letting participants speak so as to convey how each of them

experienced this unexpected change of their everyday lives. Authors such as Bauman (1987) have stressed the peculiarities of modern social planning and its effect on the lives of common people. He metaphorically speaks of "gardened" cultures to refer to social policies that attempt to educate and manipulate subordinate groups whose culture is devalued or ignored.

In planning the relocation process, Yacyretá's staff did not acknowledge many cultural particularities of the poor of Posadas. When they took the Census they did not include any questions to check what language was spoken at home, nor did they check variations in speech genres. Many of the displaced either speak Guaraní at home or employ a form of Spanish in which many meanings differ from the official national language. All pamphlets and radio announcements were made following the style of speaking used by dominant groups. This fact has impinged upon the way messages were consumed as it is apparent in many of the accounts.

Social policies also negated existing forms of social organization. When designing their programs of social action, social workers did not consider the role played by local leadership such as churchmen, grocers and political brokers, nor did they look at the importance of community spaces such as soccer fields and dancing places. The destruction of many social bonds and familiar settings of

interaction affected people's identities and self esteem. The devastating effect of these policies is expressed in the narratives recalling their past in the neighborhoods, seen as a time marked by solidarity and friendship.

Informants expressed how they felt deprived of their previous identities, insistently recalling some of EBY's actions. Nearly all men and women we interviewed remembered how they were counted and their houses measured. The manipulation of identities is also expressed in the requirements of identification documents and in obtaining of legal residency in the case of Paraguayan born neighbors. The transition from being a resident of a quarter to becoming an individual with relocation rights is expressed symbolically in the possession of the blue folder granted by Yacyretá. As one surveyor once told me, it was as if people thought they were getting a diploma. This indeed was the way they understood the meaning of the folder. The majority of residents thought that those who possessed one were entitled to a new house without having to pay for it. There are numerous cases in which people sold the folder as if it were a deed. One of my informants even told me that the folder came with a key with which they could open the door of their new house. When looking at leaflets given to the people at the beginning of the relocation process I discovered how they came to misunderstand what the folder stood for. The leaflet had a picture of the blue folder and

a hand with a key, a map including the relocation signs, and the various possible designs of houses. It said:

"Who is the beneficiary?" "If you live in a house in the areas affected by the Yacyretá project; if the Census was taken at your home; if you have proof of your house location or "blue folder," and if you are registered in EBY, you are a beneficiary of the Relocation Program and you have the opportunity of owning a home."

Residents, however, are not alone in misinterpreting what the folder stands for. Some social workers, who are in close contact with the affected population still speak about the folder as if it granted relocation rights. This creates serious problems at the time relocation negotiation starts and people find out that not everybody with a folder is entitled to a new house.

The crisis generated with the relocation process is expressed both in the narratives describing a harmonious past and in the ones depicting an obscure and dreadful present. To the majority of my informants Yacyretá turned their neighborhoods into inhospitable and lonely places. After EBY was announced and some engineering works started, neighbors say that their area was made into a swamp, full of snakes, poisonous insects and dangerous animals. This happened because of a combination of factors such as the devastating flood of 1983 and construction works being underway. The municipal government stopped providing garbage collection and the electrical and water companies stopped supplying their services to the few sectors which used to

have the luck of enjoying them. Although EBY cannot be held responsible for some of these inconveniences, people blame all their present problems to the agency. In the following chapter I will be examining some of these constructions in greater detail.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BASIC DIALOGICAL SET: YACYRETA AND THE POPULATION

While Chapter four is concerned with the first encounter between the population and the relocation agency, chapter five analyzes the basic dialogical set created with such critical encounter. Through grasping the way participants positioned each other during the relocation process we may comprehend the conditions under which communication processes occurred. The affected population's response to resettlement policies cannot be fully understood unless we examine their representations of the agency. Conversely, we can only make sense of social policies if we know how EBY's agents think about the poor of Posadas. The process I will examine is a complex one. Neither positioning totally determines communication, nor communication by itself is responsible for the various positions and identities here examined, there is a dialectical relationship between the two. This chapter also shows that interaction is shaped by participation of actors in existing systems of social relations. In the first part, I analyze how Yacyretá became reified, and in the second part I show how planners diverge in their representations about the

affected population.

Yacyretá reified

The Entidad Binacional Yacyretá is an institution and as such, it can neither speak nor do things to people. Although this seems perhaps obvious, it needs to be stressed because participants in the relocation process feel otherwise. Indeed, people to be resettled, the EBY's staff members, and politicians alike, reify the agency and refer to it as if it were a very powerful actor. I will first examine how Yacyretá is depicted among the affected population.

Yacyretá becomes naturalized

In the last chapter, I have shown how the advent of Yacyretá and the floods of 1983 were generally combined in the narratives and how the ordeals neighbors went through are blamed on both events. I will now examine the associative chains of elements within which the term Yacyretá is situated. As already discussed in the introduction, in crisis situations a process of condensation occurs: "all component elements and conditions fuse, as a whole, into a ruptural unity" (Althusser, quoted in Laclau 1979). I will thus identify the combined elements and how they were associated.

1- Natural and regular floods. They "catch", "visit", "come

and go."

Past floods, the affected population say, were natural. Many people say that floods "visited" regularly, every five years, and assure one that they have never been as big as the one in 1983. If the water ever reached their house, they assert, it would not stay long; to prevent damage, it would be enough to raise the house from the ground through a procedure they called *sobrado*, which consists in putting pieces of wood under the tin and/or cardboard walls to lift them. To people in the lowland areas of Posadas, water and floods are things endowed with a will: they visit, they come and go, they chase and *agarran* (catch) the defenseless victims.

Felisa once complained: "The river intimidates us, because every so often it visits, and when it comes, it takes away from us everything we have...and we leave our house and we suffer."

2- Man-made floods - Brasil - Itaipú - Dam

A great number of informants blamed the devastating floods of 1983 both on Brazil and on the huge hydroelectric dam of Itaipú:

Dominga: The river only brought sacrifice, sorrow and loss. This flood was different from the previous ones, because it came suddenly. This was because Itaipú controls all this region from there. It is the biggest dam in the world.

Casimiro: With the flood of 1981, everything was ruined in 24 hours. It was the most impressive flood we have ever had. There had been hundreds of them. But before, we would be back in one or two

weeks. Here, we lost everything. Until now, we are convinced that it was Itaipú that opened the gate. The water came in a few hours...The papers said it was a lie, that it was a normal flood.

Rubén: And that flood is not natural, because I believe, they had opened a gate. It was as if they had thrown a large bucket of water. It came, and then left. And again, three days later. I woke up and the water was half a block away and it was quiet and I did not think anything bad could happen...(he is here referring to a more recent flood in 1987).

José Ríos: Yacyretá started to come to our house. They would say that we had to leave the place. because of the water, they say that they are going to throw the water from Brazil. I don't know, they lie so much...

Itaipú, the large Paraguayan and Brazilian dam, was under construction on the Upper Paraná river during 1983. When the floods occurred, the lake was not yet formed. What did happen that year is that the Itaipú engineering works, permitted the lowering of the river level when the gates were closed to fill the reservoir. This was done shortly after the end of the dramatic floods. No informant mentioned this event. Facts were inverted in the collective memory of the population.

In chapter two, I have described how, historically, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay struggled to gain control over the Paraná river region. In our summary of the negotiations leading up to the construction of Yacyretá, we also saw that Argentine authorities felt urged to start the works because of the geopolitical rivalry with Brazil and the fear that Brazil would become more influential through

building the Itaipú dam jointly with Paraguay. The press echoed these depictions of the Brazilians as ambitious and wicked, always trying to corrode the national identity. It was during those years under a military regime, that Gendarmery¹ initiated a campaign in the national frontiers: they painted the houses in white and blue, the national colors; they organized a children's Gendarmery among the poor; and accused Brazilians of controlling communications networks, such as radios and Television broadcasts.

3- Man-made floods - Yacyretá - The Ramp and the Enchorrada

In El Chaquito, Heller, Villa Coz and San Cayetano, the majority of the residents are convinced that the ramp built for the bridge Posadas-Encarnación is making things much worse. It causes what they call la enchorrada, a sudden burst of water that covers everything with the stinking refuse from the city:

Silvia: It rained. And the enchorrada, because of that little stream, would flood everything. All the dirt from the city. All the dirt from the Vicario stream would come and deposit right there, where we were. The ramp was already high, and the dirt would trickle and would stay, forming a dike, because of the ramp. It had never been like that before. The water would run when we had floods...In 1982, we had to leave. Because everything came with that ramp. It started to exert pressures on us. They did, they filled everything. And when we could no longer bear it, because we were uncomfortable, then, they said: "Well, you want the houses. All right." It was a

¹ Special corps of armed men who are in charge of guarding the national frontiers.

kind of pressure, you know. We had to accept anything.

Alicia: Then came that rain. All the houses started to get covered by water. There, the problem started, with that street. Because we had never had problems with the floods. As my mother in law said: we were like those toads, we would float as soon as there was some thunder.

Marta: The first big, big flood which caught us was in 1965. It started because of the bridge.

Carmen: Did they start the bridge in that year?

Marta: Yes, of course. Because they built that ramp and that attracted a lot of water. The water spread over a greater area. Then, that big one caught us. Each time it was even worse.

Most of the informants speak of the ramp under construction and of the bridge as if the two were the Yacyretá dam itself. When Argentine authorities were trying to convince the Paraguayans to accept the joint venture of Yacyretá, they offered to build the bridge to make the deal more attractive. Everybody links the two projects, although ever since the initial negotiations, the Argentine government and the EBY have been striving to make the public believe that each of those undertakings is independent of each other.

The majority of the residents said that they were not quite sure what a dam was. They reported that on the first encounter with the EBY employees, they were told that water would get them or that "everything would be flooded". In describing what was communicated to them, they employed the same words they use when referring to the actions of a "natural" flood. Unfortunately, there is no way we can

recover the original dialogues between Yacyretá's staff and the so called beneficiaries. What we do have at our disposal are the information leaflets distributed in the affected areas. One said as follows:

Yacyretá is news

Transformation of Posadas in the 1980s. In less than ten years, Yacyretá will mean to this capital:

* An international bridge; * A new port and its infrastructure; * *Defensas costeras* -streambank erosion control-; * A new bus terminal; * A new freight terminal; * 30 km of new railroads; * New highways, including bridges; * A water pumping station; * A power station; * A sewage treatment facility; * and new housing complex for the families occupying houses that will be affected by the Yacyretá works.

The written material mentions neither water nor flooding: the closest it gets to those concepts is through reference to a lake that will be located in front of Posadas. The way the information was spelled out, at least in its written version, contributed to the merging of meanings. For years, there was no way people could see the engineering works of the dam itself. First, they were not started until 1984. Second, the dam site was miles away from their houses. The first years after the 1979 Census men and women in the affected areas were very skeptical about any news regarding the future relocation. The majority of those interviewed affirm they had not believed anything. This was mainly because they could not see any physical changes around them. Gradually they began to take the ramp, the bridge and the floods as proofs of Yacyretá's existence. Not until there

were these tangible signs, did earlier accounts acquire verisimilitude.

To some, the floods were intentionally caused either by Brazil or by the EBY. The aim, many believed, was to make them go or submit to the authority of Yacyretá. One informant, who is already living in the newly constructed houses, commented that Brazil was creating the situation, but that they had stopped doing that, once neighbors left the area. He complained they had not been warned "that the big flood was coming when the EBY informed that in the future everything would be filled with water.

4- Yacyretá - The Costanera - The end of floods

When recalling what they first heard about Yacyretá, a few of those interviewed said that they would not be relocated because of the dam but because of the Costanera - a promenade generally built next to a river or a lake. Some others asserted that Yacyretá is a costanera which will prevent floods once it is finished. When preliminary studies on the hydroelectric project started, EBY's leaflets, press releases and newspapers articles included the control of floods among the most important benefits of dam construction. This may have been associated with the coast defence mentioned in the leaflets.

In el Chaquito, Heller, San Cayetano and Villa Coz, the most common associations we registered, were those fusing

the concepts of the ramp or the bridge, the floods, the natural and the exceptional and Yacyretá. This did not occur in Bajada Vieja, a neighborhood where none of the complementary engineering works were under construction. This sector of Posadas only changed dramatically with the 1983 floods. Furthermore, contacts with the EBY staff were very limited so there were very few opportunities in which residents obtained information whatever it were. It is not surprising then, that Yacyretá was most commonly associated with the floods. There are no references to the bridge, the ramp, or the streams; but there appear other elements with which the project is associated: one, is the costanera; another is other public housing projects which the province is building with national funds. Nearly everybody relates Yacyretá with the floods. Within this associative chain, a frequent condensation is the one that fuses the transitory relocation sites assigned by the province to shelter the victims of the 1983 floods, with the Yacyretá resettlement areas (cf. chapter four).

Yacyretá, together with other works to which it is associated, such as Itaipú, the ramp and the like, serves to explain things in retrospect. For example, they are posited as the cause of earlier events such as the big floods of the 1960s. Other people, although not overtly attributing the disasters to Yacyretá, make some connections between the two: they assert, for example, that the disastrous flood was

in 1979 instead of 1983. As already discussed in the previous chapter, 1979 was the year EBY took a Census of the affected population and also the year when they started the Swap Operation.

In sum, there are numerous ways various elements become associated with Yacyretá. Quite often, the resulting combinations are contradictory and ambiguous, a characteristic feature of the condensation process. As noted before, condensation is likely to occur in critical situations; because it develops in such circumstances it may carry fatalist overtones. A quite common remark was that the neighborhoods -and the country- are cursed. Javier, from San Cayetano thinks: "they have kicked the liver of Argentina and if we add the floods...everything is in such a bad shape." Dominga, says it more tragically and with a religious rhetoric: "I have suffered enough. Tomorrow...only God. Because I have suffered five things and of those things I can no longer suffer...I can only wait for death.

When the informants comment that what had happened since Yacyretá's announcements is not "natural", they do not necessarily imply that they were facing a man-made disaster. On the contrary, to many "not natural" is something out of the ordinary; as one had put it, it is a "phenomenon" and hence, mysterious, powerful and frightening. It is something with such a strength that it can "lift whole houses and carry them in one piece," so fearsome that even among those

who have already moved, there are still some who say they wake up at hearing the first drop of rain and start packing and moving the furniture automatically.

Expectations and response

When speaking about ideological constructions, authors point at a recurrent feature: symbols and meanings working to the benefit of specific dominant groups are presented in such a way that they seem to be part of the natural, objective world, endowed with a logic of their own. Yet, an analysis of how ideology works can be oversimplified when, for example, it is thought that meanings are intentionally produced with the purpose of controlling and reproducing a system of social relations. Many ideas which are taken for real are not deliberately and consciously produced although they do help power groups and contribute to sustain relations of domination.

Because the common man regards these constructions as independent of the will of human beings, he thinks there is very little left for him to do. He is likely to experience the same helplessness when he confronts things presented as natural and finds himself in situations perceived as unnatural and exceptional as those represented by Yacyretá. In the areas affected by the hydroelectric dam, everybody thinks there was nothing they could do in response to the project. When my assistants and I asked people to be

resettled whether they had done or said anything with regards to relocation, we always received in reply an answer that was really a question: "And what could we have done?" Insofar as the dam becomes naturalized - even to the point of being considered supernatural, an exceptional "natural event"- residents from the affected neighborhoods felt there was no alternative. Nobody can oppose a great powerful structure such as Yacyretá, one can only submit to it. In return, those who submit expect to be taken care of and protected. As seen above, most people believe that there is a relationship between Yacyretá and the floods. They thus think that they are entitled to demand help when water damages their houses. If authorities from Yacyretá inform them the Relocation Agency has no responsibility in the matter, they feel deceived and betrayed. Informants grumbled that nobody from the EBY gave them a hand in the disastrous floods of 1983. "The least Yacyretá could have done was to furnish a truck."... "The neighborhood was expecting another thing from them," a woman told me.

Yacyretá is more powerful than the Pope and than anybody else

The Church of San Cayetano played an important role in the lives of those living in the surroundings. As I have already pointed out (see chapter four), it competed with the grocers in organizing soccer teams and with the neighborhood

commissions in sponsoring social events such as the celebration of Mother's Day or Children's Day. I have also noted that through their actions, these institutions both reproduced and contributed to create the social and economic relations of the neighborhoods. Yet control of moral and spiritual issues were virtually the exclusive concern of the Church. Very few would dare to dispute its power to deal with such matters. Thus the Church would set moral standards by striving to convince neighbors to get married and by guiding them in the education of their children.

Yacyretá did sweep away these previous social arrangements and in doing so proved its power over them. The Church of San Cayetano served as focus of the few opposition movements to the relocation project and failed. The priest, now an army chaplain, called for meetings to design strategies to resist resettlement. Actions against Yacyretá included masses, demonstrations, and petitions presented to the local authorities and to the press. The Bishop of Posadas took issue with the demands and made claims with regards to the Church building which was the pride of the neighbors.

Don José Ríos has worked for the father for six years and says he was paid weekly but that he asked not to be paid on Saturdays because he "felt sorry to take money from the Chapel." He does not mention any actions in which residents took part. According to him, it was only Church

representatives who pleaded: "It was left in the hands of the Bishop, he was the one who "administered" more. He succeeded in getting what he had to, we do not know how much it was paid in dollars." By saying that compensation was paid in dollars, he implies that a very large sum was paid. Although he imagines that the Church was able to make a good deal, he feels that relocation could not be resisted, not even by the Church: "I gave importance to Yacyretá because I knew it would happen. There were many who did not want (to be relocated). But there is no (possible) resistance against force." A very active puntero de barrio -a grassroots political organizer- said that at first they would not believe that Yacyretá would become a reality, because of "the force the Church has." As many others, he realized that it was a "serious issue" and that the dam would be built "when they knocked the Chapel down." A resident of San Cayetano who belonged to the Congregation of the "Apostolate of the Prayer of the Sacred Heart of Jesus", one among the five in the quarter, remembered the Church as an institution in permanent growth. He said that it created the situation of "understanding each other more, of uniting, working and living more...then, Yacyretá came, it destroyed it, and everybody dispersed."Immediately after remembering this he complained: "they did not communicate this plan to the people, that is part of the pride and arrogance of Yacyretá, the Church belongs to everybody."

I asked Doña Felisa from El Chaquito whether they had done anything when they knew they would demolish the Church and she answered:

Who would say anything, if it is not us who rule...the Bishop, yes...They promised they would make one in the Barrio Yacyretá. But the Church was done with the sweat of all the workers, all the neighbors. We could not do anything because they had to take it out, it bothered. What can you do, even if people protests, they will not be able to do anything. (asked about how long it took to take everything from the Church) I do not know when the deadline was, but in the end, they did not take everything...maybe it had not really bothered them yet. The only thing is that it was going to be left alone. Everybody went, everybody was crying. There was no party, nobody wanted to know anything more about it. We only had a farewell mass.

Nearly everybody commented how miserable they felt when the Church was destroyed, and many said they resented this loss more than that of their own home. Many parishioners recalled that when the day was due they all cried in despair and that some of the workmen hired to demolish the Chapel did not have the courage to do so. Rubén thinks that after the big flood had "disintegrated"² the people and had convinced them to go, "they" gave the coup de grace by knocking down the Church. "They needed the Pope's permission, I don't know, from Italy, to demolish the Church. You cannot simply demolish it." He then repeated

² Rubén employs the verb to disintegrate to convey the meaning "to disperse and to separate." This was pointed out by most of the informants, they felt that with the floods they were separated from their old neighbors and that their union disappeared.

that everything "rotted" when they destroyed the building. When asked who had done so, he replied: "Well, Yacyretá. I believe they were the ones who had built another one. Because there is no other company. Yacyretá ordena everything (meaning both it arranges and orders). It was then that they disintegrated everything." Rubén continues detailing the great power the Church enjoyed: neither the bishop nor the radical representatives could do much against it; it controlled everything, even the neighborhood commission; it had the *manija* -the handle, a slang expression meaning great power-.

The accounts are eloquent enough: in the eyes of the people forced to relocate Yacyretá proved to have greater powers than even the Pope. If such a grandiose religious authority was unable to prevent the EBY from demolishing the Chapel, what was left to them? In acknowledging the EBY's superiority, people also expected it would replace the Church in many of its functions. As some of these roles were indeed performed by the EBY's staff, in the long run these same actions contributed to reinforce the representation of Yacyretá as a Church-like institution. Such proved to be the case with the programs initiated by the social workers to provide people with documentation, including proofs of marriage and birth registration. Likewise, the EBY also attempted to set moral standards by establishing the criteria of promiscuity and by planning to "educate" the

affected populations. Education was understood in various senses which were covered by different social policies to be discussed below. What needs to be stressed here, is that through its actions Yacyretá came to occupy a position previously reserved to the Church. And this entailed particular privileges and obligations.

Yacyretá kills

But Yacyretá had not only shown that it could impose its will on the Church. In the view of lowland dwellers, it manifested its supremacy through other means. It demonstrated, for example, that it could play a role in such mysterious matters of life and death. Only those already living in the newly built neighborhood of Yacyretá think in this fashion. While interviewing a woman who was one of the first to be resettled, her husband insisted: tell her that your grandmother died of sorrow. In 1982, when it was necessary to clear an area for the bridge works, they told her grandmother she should leave. They offered her either compensation or transitory relocation until the new houses were finished. Her grandmother asked for the money because at that time the majority felt it was quite unlikely the houses would ever be built. So, she had to move away from her daughter and son and their children who lived next door but were not yet affected. They explained to me that she could not bear this separation from her relatives and the

familiar surroundings and felt so unhappy that died.

The belief that Yacyretá brought much sorrow is shared by most of the residents in the affected areas, but only those already relocated seem to associate it with death. Ramona, a nurse who is now living in the new house compound, thinks of Yacyretá as a more devastating force than the floods. She remarked that nobody died with the floods, but that "a lot of neighbors started to die with this thing of Yacyretá." She remembered they had lost Don Rodríguez, just a little time after they left. He died of a heart attack. She mentioned to me that there had been other cases. She, herself, said to have been sick of melancholy for a whole week after resettlement and that whenever she remembers it:

It feels as if it (the sorrow) wants to come back again, but we must accept and adapt to this, because things cannot always be the same way...we all missed the neighborhood a lot...Here, came Mrs.Madrid, shortly after she arrived, she died. I was so sorry, she was my seamstress, such a nice woman. All my neighbors were so helpful, so good. We miss so much. Because over there, there was a plenitud de andar (we felt at ease). We had the river banks, we would go nearby on a picnic...But now, I can say I adapted to this and I am happy. All I said is the truth of events. We all had gone there, and I had bad luck, because the father of my children passed away and I had to do everything by myself.

Not only the population, but also some of the EBY's social workers related the deaths to relocation. One of them commented the case of an old man who came to the Yacyreta's headquarters in Posadas to sign all the agreements the day before moving. The next day, when the EBY sent a van with a

driver and a social worker to his house to help him move, his relatives reported that he had suddenly died during the night. She told me she had immediately reported this to the EBY's anthropologist. I will discuss the implications of her account in chapter six. For the moment, I will focus on the relationship between death and relocation.

Among experts on social impact assessment, it is universally agreed that population displacement is a disruptive and harmful process which can lead to death. Indeed, many pointed to a close association between compulsory relocation and mortality and morbidity rate-increases³. William Ackerman had noted that "even when planning is effective, some (specially the aged) will never come to terms with their new homes. For them, the transition period ends only with death (quoted in Goldsmith and Hildyard:1984)." Although taking account of the fact that there are more casualties among the old, nobody comments on how the displaced populations interpret the deaths. I believe that this topic deserves special attention. Here, we have seen that "the damned," as Scudder calls them, connect the relocation and the deceases. This belief has an effect in that it characterizes Yacyretá as an extremely potent entity and thus enforces the already dominant feeling of

³ Theoretically this correlation is pointed in Scudder's multidimensional stress model. There is wide empirical evidence on the increase of the death rate particularly among old people. See, for example, Fahim (1981); Colson(1971; Cernea (1988).

helplessness. For the experts, this "mortality effect" is one among the many unintended consequences of projects; for the relocated, it serves as another sign of the might of Yacyretá.

Yacyretá disposes of the community's social relations, its forces of production, and does as it wishes

In previous chapters, I showed how navigation and its riverine economy had been on decline for decades until it was totally replaced by truck transportation with the opening of the highways. By the 1970s, the majority of the river related industries, workshops and other economic activities had either disappeared, or were in evident decay. The few that remained were no longer hiring as many men as they used to. However, very few of the lowland residents said they had lost their jobs before Yacyretá's presence in the area. The majority of the interviewed repeated that the EBY brought major changes to the neighborhood by making the Heller factory, the meat-packing plant and many saw mills go out of business. According to them, before Yacyretá, there was full employment and many workers lived in the immediate surroundings. After the announcement of the project there were neither jobs nor people left. According to one informant, "now, there is nothing left in the neighborhood, you cannot even buy firewood. Before, people would feel all right here, there

was plenty of work."

In reality, most of these sources of labor were dependent by factors the residents could neither recognize nor acknowledge. As mentioned before, the regional economy associated to the river had been deteriorating for decades. In addition, the disastrous economic policies of the national government seriously affected local production. Because the exchange rates were so favorable for imports, it was cheaper to buy wood from the USA and from Chile, than extracting it locally. Therefore, by the time Argentina and Paraguay decided to construct the dam, economic opportunities in the relocation areas were already very scarce. Some of the factories had not acknowledged their situation either. On the contrary, they were eager to demonstrate that their businesses were prosperous, in order to put them in a position to demand large amounts of money in compensation for the loss of investments. I heard rumors both from Posadeños in general and also from Yacyretá and Province officials that compensation negotiations involving some of these industries were shot through with corruption.

Besides being accused of having done away with the sources for salaried work, the EBY was also blamed for the shutdown of most of the groceries. Some, undoubtedly, had to leave the area when their sector was displaced by preparatory works related to the construction of the bridge. Some in this group opted for compensation payments; others

moved to the new Yacyretá neighborhood to reopen their stores. Still, the great majority went out of business either because of the acute economic crisis of the 1980s, because they had lost most of their installations and merchandise with the floods of 1983; or both. In 1982, when we were doing a study on means of subsistence at the request of EBY to the National University of Misiones, many of the grocers informed us they had to stop giving credit through the use of the libretas (see chapter four) because of inflation and the alarming rate of unemployment. Even at that point it was becoming very hard to maintain the traditional socio-economic arrangements with their accompanying reciprocal obligations. In time, neighbors also changed their buying patterns and shifted to one of the downtown supermarkets that offered discount prices and the possibility of buying on credit.

With regards to grassroots organizations, such as the neighborhood commissions, neighbors feel that either EBY rendered them useless or that it contributed to their disintegration. In Bajada Vieja, one of my assistants asked whether they had a neighborhood commission and if they had made claims to EBY through it. Doña Juana seemed surprised at the question: "No, the commission cannot be used to deal with Yacyretá, it is not for that. It has another purpose..." In this neighborhood, the commission had been organized by the well to do living on the paved and non-

floodable parts of the area. It also has the support of the Fatima Church on the Bajada Vieja street. Obviously, the interests of the social sectors differ; while those in the lowlands are concerned with getting drinking water and an easy access to their homes, the ones above, are interested in maintaining the charm of the historic street and making it into a tourist attraction. The commission organizes activities to "help the poor" but does not represent them in their claims.

The situation in the other areas is somewhat different because the neighborhood commissions represent a more homogenous population and members have shared interests. In the late 70s and early 80s, most of them ceased to operate, not because of Yacyretá's intentions but because their activities were banned by the military authorities of the country. Some of the commissions reorganized when the political circumstances changed in 1983 and re-opened claims to the Provincial authorities and to EBY. The relocated inhabitants do not reject their mediation but seem to be very skeptical about their possible achievements. In general, they think these grassroots organizations are not well equipped to confront a situation like relocation, partly because they tend to get involved into political factional disputes.

Briefly put, most of the neighbors believed that EBY could destroy the basic socio-economic arrangements of the

communities. Conversely, they also thought it had the power of creating them. Indeed, during the first years of the project, EBY's social workers promoted technical training courses and promised job opportunities in the dam project and in the complementary works. Many neighbors took the courses with the hope of finding a job and felt disappointed and angry at Yacyretá when their expectations were not met: "They are liars, they had promised us jobs, and did not get any." Course enrollment could also respond to other purposes: more than one of the social workers mentioned to me they were not sure whether people registered in the courses because they were truly interested or because they wanted to please them.

Neighbors think Yacyretá acts as it wishes, without taking into account local needs. To many, the decision to move some people first was just a caprice of EBY. They saw no reasons for the early displacements, basically because they found it hard to determine the rationale involved in such an irregular pattern of relocation policies. They could not understand the mechanisms by which only a few households in a block would receive first priority. Most of the residents were convinced that EBY chose the order of resettlement in accordance to its wishes, favoring those who were well-disposed to the Relocation Agency. Hence, they regard relocation as a reward for good behavior. Conversely, they believe that the Agency punishes troublemakers by

postponing their departure from the neighborhood, and, also, by making them live under deplorable conditions. Yacyretá neither plots the best strategy to take advantage of its victims nor does it deliberately require proofs of loyalty or take revenge on those who oppose it. Nevertheless, some strategies developed by some members of EBY's staff have contributed to this representation of the Binational Entity. For example, I observed that all the residents from a sector but one, were called for a negotiation meeting in which problems with the deeds were to be discussed. The man who was supposedly excluded was an active member of the neighborhood commission. Through comments from neighbors and from some of EBY's employees, through analyzing newspaper articles and by looking at the dates of relocation, I also verified that in at least one case, an active member of a neighborhood commission was neutralized with the offer of a new house sooner than the due date. This, of course, would not be admitted officially as an institutional policy. Furthermore, some say that it is impossible to decide such matters from Posadas, because decisions on relocation are made in Buenos Aires and that there is no way these can be influenced. Knowledge about procedures is vague. When asked about who had the final word on relevant issues, the social workers told me they were not quite sure, that it could be either the surveyors or the lawyers.

Yacyretá is a state within a state

Many informants reported to be just "waiting" until Yacyretá comes to do what it has already promised. A lot of them understand there is no need to go to EBY or to any governmental office. Florencio told me: -"Why should we, if it is them who are the interested party. When they need the place, I am sure they will come." Similarly, another one from El Chaquito, Braulio Domínguez, asserted: "they will take us from here because they wish to, but this is ours." These statements illustrate a generalized attitude towards Yacyretá which is related to the way EBY is understood.

Doña Marta who is already living in the newly constructed neighborhood, recalls that people did not react in any particular manner when told about the project. Rather, she said most of them were "passive." She added there was nothing they could do because it was a "thing of the State." And right after that, she commented they had the "illusion" that they could either get compensation money or a new house; and that given the economic conditions, there was no other way they could ever attain ownership of a brick house. On her view, there was no reaction and people accepted everything quietly because they felt they could get something they desired.

So far, I have shown how Yacyretá is generally identified with the state. The affected population thinks that EBY, being the state, can dispose of the land at its

will, and that they cannot oppose to it. Therefore, they "wait" and are "passive." However, the belief that the state is entitled to do certain things, does not mean that people blindly follow its decisions. What they do, is to try to make the best of the situation as they can within given limits. These limits are hard to overcome: "We are under the power of them," more than one told me. A woman, who has already been relocated, commented that some people miss their previous houses and that they would like to have some improvements made in the new neighborhood, but that they are afraid of asking for them. She attributes this to the fact that with "Yacyretá there is no doctor, there is nobody who may interfere, neither politicians, nor nothing else. They are really apart."

Insofar as the relocatees become more acquainted with EBY and maintain more frequent contacts with it -as is the case of those already living in the new housing project, the feeling that they are confronting a very powerful "other" increases. Hopelessness is even greater in the case of those who either have to pay for the house or are uncertain about their legal situation. Ramona, who has a house in the Yacyretá quarter, said that in her sector there is no neighborhood commission and that in a way there is no need for one because:

Ramona:...Yacyretá is the one who decides.
Carmen: How does it decide? Ramona: They come and say:-"That thing will be made here and chau (bye-bye)." And they decide, because, if they say "I

want you to take away that bench, it can't be there," we then have to put it away. Carmen: Yes? Why? Ramona: because they have the power, they decide until we finish paying for everything, they are deciding...

This same woman added that there is an office in there and that "they are there to control what happens with the works." She said that the engineers and licenciadas walk around so as to see "what is done, what they like, what they do not like."

There is no opposition because the project is indeed shown as something that the state has decided on regardless of what they want. Analysts had observed that in cases of compulsory relocation caused by hydroelectric projects, people see that resistance is useless because they are situated in an unfavorable position vis a vis the government. They are poorly organized and do not have the right networks. Most dam projects are presented as faits accomplis and are legitimized with a national ideology which it is difficult to oppose without being considered an enemy of the Motherland⁴.

The affected population of Yacyretá knows and employs the legitimating rhetoric but establishes a distinction when it comes to identify the beneficiaries. They do say that the

⁴ With regards to the presentation of dam projects as fait accompli, see for example: Lawson (1982); Goldsmith and Hildyard (1984). To see how these projects are promoted as the road to the country's development and well being see for example: Fahim (1983); Colson (1971), Chambers (1970); Da Rosa (1983); Bartolomé M. and Barabás (1984)

project is good because it promotes the nation's welfare, brings progress, would bring lots of tourists from remote places of the world. Some say that maybe their sons would enjoy the benefits. Most, however, stress that in their own case, it only brings sorrow and hardship. This is mainly felt by those experiencing the effects of the bridge and water plant construction. Most of the relocatees agree that they are sacrificing for the benefit of all. They think the state is entitled to make such demands from its subjects. In return for their submission, the relocatees expect specific services and benefits. They assume, for example, that Yacyretá is obliged to solve any problem they encounter, be it legal, financial or medical. For them, the EBY is a paternalistic authoritarian welfare state, a demanding father who rewards the obedient children and punishes those who defy his authority.

In the previous sections, I have shown how the affected population interprets Yacyretá within the existing framework of reference and associates it with familiar concepts. However, Yacyretá is never represented as an exact copy of that which they already know: it is always seen as if it were charged with a greater potency. Thus, as discussed in a previous section, it is not for example, "a regular flood" but a "phenomenon, an exceptional flood." This same notion is present when they think of it as the state. It is the state, but a greater one. As informants say, it is "apart",

the local government has no authority over it. Domingo, from the neighborhood commission of El Chaquito, complained that from the very beginning the Province had failed in the defence of her territory's interests. According to him, one of the problems was that the former radical government had not given enough jurisdictional power to COPROYA, the provincial agency created to deal with dam related problems. "They did not even have their own seal," he said. He then commented that the new Peronist government was trying to revitalize the COPROYA so as to respond to the Chaquito commission's claims. He added that they could do very little despite their efforts because they had found that "Yacyretá is a state within a state." By the mid of the 18th century the enemies of Jesuits were accusing them of the same thing: of separatism and of "building an Empire within an Empire."⁵ On a press conference, the executive director of COPROYA had employed exactly the same expression as Domingo to criticize the power of Yacyretá. This coincidence in meanings and use of speech genres is not surprising, as I will later show: it reveals strategic alliances against the relocation agency.

Once national authorities decided to construct the dam, the inhabitants of the northeastern region explained their

⁵ Interestingly enough the Governor and some representatives of Misiones have recently used (1988-1989) this same rhetorical device, "the state within the state", to oppose to the Provincial Law of Indian Rights passed by the former Radical party on the grounds that claims to legally consider the Mbyá indians as a "People" are unconstitutional because they jeopardize national unity.

situation with regards to the project in terms of their historically subordinate position vis a vis the national state. Relocation problems were thus understood as a failure of the local authorities to confront the central government.

Luis María Casagrande the Radical Vice-Governor of Misiones until 1987 and former head of COPROYA compared the EBY to a caste and said that, as such, it was untouchable. He partly traces this independent stance of its technicians and engineers to the fact that the dam project started during the military government. He also compared the functioning of the Binational Entity to that of the army barracks. He felt that at the beginning, Yacyretá maintained a cold attitude and that through the years they were able to improve the relations, but never enough.

In 1982, a former Peronist governor, Juan Manuel Oviedo, declared to the press that one of the problems with the provincial government was its lack of interest and subordination to the central power and to the commands of the EBY's Buenos Aires headquarters (El Territorio, November 14, 1982). He accused the Buenos Aires decision makers of being insensitive to the problems of the relocatees. During the military government, criticisms of the centralization of decisions in Buenos Aires were more acute. After elections in 1983, the Peronists advanced claims for greater independence from the capital. In 1986, Oviedo, by then representative to the National House of Congress, submitted

a project in which he proposed moving EBY headquarters to Posadas. He argued that those who make the decisions affecting numerous low income families from the province, "had never put their shoes into the red mud."⁶ This project outraged the Correntinos who accused the Misioneros of trying to gain too much advantage from something that was being built in their province. They complained that the Misiones press never mentions that the engineering works are being done in Ituzaingó and that they only say the dam is located "90 km downstream of Posadas." Conversely, the Misioneros accuse the Correntinos of being in collusion with the central power. Thus, in discussing matters related to Yacyretá, historical disputes are reenacted: the Correntinos tell the Misioneros that if it were not for their generosity, Posadas would still be a town of Corrientes; the Misioneros reply that they would have never had so many problems with land property, had it not been for the greed of their neighbors.

The same system of norms regulating the behavior with the neighbors guides the relationship which the affected population establishes with Yacyretá-as state. It is

⁶ Misiones is known as the province of the red soil. In Argentina, the expression to put one's shoes in the mud, refers to be in contact with the common people through visiting the places where they live. The mud symbolizes the earth, floodable roads associated with the dwellings of the poor. The expression alludes to public figures who reject technocratic knowledge and judge the problems through sensing them.

summarized in the local concept of **molestar** -to bother. The word connotes a reciprocal behavior, involving mutual obligations. It implies making demands to others, and through doing so, establishing a particular bond, through which these others are entitled to make claims in the future.

The People

"Uprooted," "dammed," "compulsory" relocation are some among the many words specialists in dam projects use to refer to the population to be resettled. Most of the terms employed connote suffering and impositions from above. The Yacyretá project is an exception to this: none of the most widely known words could be used for many years. Since the times of the military dictatorship, **beneficiario** has been the official name adopted to address the affected population. The choice of a name illustrates a common practice during the years of El Proceso. Authorities did not tolerate the association of any negative effect with government policies. For example, at that time elementary school teachers had received an order telling them to analyze the causes of school desertion. Instructions warned them not to explain the situation with reference to the socio-economic situation. Failure was to be blamed either on parents or on the poor training of teachers. Similarly, compulsory relocation could not be acknowledged: an

anthropologist at EBY received a penalty for employing such word. There was another word that had to be omitted: *afectado* (affected). In Spanish, the verb to affect may mean either to assign or to damage. It is this second sense they wanted to avoid. It was not allowed to admit that the project could cause any harm. There was a reality created through words, orderly and harmonious; and there was a suppressed, unmentionable one. Through the prohibition of naming dam generated social damages, power holders negated them.

Although there was a deliberate attempt to create a new individual by renaming it, authorities did not totally succeed. Not a single man or woman we interviewed took this identity of beneficiary as their own. Instead, they called themselves "families with a folder with a right to relocation", "family heads with a folder" or simply "neighbors to be resettled" and on some occasions "compulsory relocated."⁷

Yacyretá's staff did not include the term beneficiary in their everyday speech. They only employed it in written reports or in very formal contexts of communication such as press conferences, encounters with government officials and public lectures on relocation. When asked about what terms

⁷ This is how neighbors from El Chaquito identified themselves in a letter to Governor Julio César Humada (october 6 1989) and in various letters to politicians and to the press.

they used to refer to the relocated population they would mention the official one, but not a single taped interview shows a staff member employing the term "beneficiary." Two technicians in the social sciences questioned the use of this word, since they could not see benefit to the population: "you end up complicating their lives," one said. Most of the staff members favor a more ambiguous, neutral and generic term: they generally speak of *la gente* -the people-. While the use of *la gente* does not imply a value judgement, the expression *esta gente* -these people- is imbued with a very derogatory connotation. This latter biased meaning goes hand in hand with others such as "they prefer to live in ranchos", "they are very ignorant people", "they are *orillera*⁸ people." A Buenos Aires born lawyer insisted that "*esta gente*" is very different: "A man, for example, has two houses each with a woman and gets the two together on weekends." Then, he added that the problem was that "there are two different cultural levels," exactly the same remark a surveyor made to me. The lawyer thought that even the highest level is rather ignorant (referring to the local upper class). After I allowed myself to be drawn into complicity by behaving as if I belonged to his same *porteña* social class, he confided that the *Misionera* lower class is

⁸ People from the outlying districts of a city, from the poorest quarters. It is a synonym of *arrabalero*, also a very pejorative word. Both terms are generally used in tango music and make reference to people who are outlaws and live at the margins of society.

terribly ignorant. "Maybe it is related to the Guaraní influence, maybe it is because they are so much Paraguayans, they do not know the laws of the country." He went on to say that Posadas and the province is an island. He insisted on the differences with the civilized center. There were some details that he seemed to like, though:

They are very respectful, very submissive (docile). Only those who have money complain. But they are so patient, they are used to the paternalism of the state. Most of them trust us a lot, they expect we will solve all their problems. They are not conscious they do have a right. They thank you. They have another way of thanking.

Another lawyer also asserted that these persons ignore the most elemental things of life and of culture in general. Both legal experts see the population to be relocated as a separate society, not integrated into the national juridical system. They are not alone in this image of the Posadas urban poor. A social worker told me that there is a very special form of social life and that violence is quite common in these areas. "People do not have a form of life committed to the same society."

Some lawyers, surveyors and social workers think that it would probably have been better if EBY had moved the affected population to other huts, because that is "their way of life," "their culture." One thought: "maybe it would be better if we built houses similar to their huts; not with regards to the quality of the materials, but in ambience." The head of COPROYA shares this belief and has a very

particular position in this respect. He says that the EBY had broken its word by building "these luxurious houses that have nothing to do with these people's culture." He complained that the Relocation Agency had promised to replace the former dwellings with the same -house by house- and that now people are expected to pay installments for houses that do not correspond to their life ways.

Depictions of the population are based on a combination of the staff's biases and of "objective" scientifically grounded data such as the statistics on income, illiteracy, labor, and other information obtained with the census of 1979. Quantitative analysis of the population contributes to its objectification. People become things to be counted, registered, scrutinized and technically manipulated. Instead of being addressed with their family names, men and women to be resettled are treated as units of registration, household heads, and members of domestic units.

Biases may vary slightly according to the social origins of the staff's members. Among the professionals of porteño origin (from the city of Buenos Aires, "the port"), it is common to see the whole of the regional culture as different, inferior and not entirely Argentine, as the remarks of one of the lawyers illustrate. Local specialists in the social sciences claim to be better equipped to understand the people to be relocated, but most of their representations of the poor are as biased as those of the

outsiders. Obviously, Misiones-born staff members do not attribute the non-desirable behavior of the population of the lowland areas to an inferior regional culture. Rather, they see this behavior as an expression of a different class - a migrant peasantry or an urban subproletariat- or as due to the presence of Paraguayan elements within the communities; or both of them combined. Both locals and outsiders emphasize ignorance, foreignness, irrational or wild behavior when describing inhabitants of the areas to be flooded. These are exactly the same attributes which local elites and foreign visitors assigned to the population's ancestors (see chapter two).

EBY's social programs, although said to be rationally-scientifically designed, rely heavily on a priori value judgments of the situation. Social workers developed programs of "social accompaniment" which they define as actions of "social education"⁹ and are believed to operate on felt needs. More often than not, social workers inquire very little into people's expectations and what they call felt needs are frequently what they presuppose should be the group desires¹⁰. On rare occasions, social workers encourage

⁹ To see how social workers at the EBY understand their role, read Schamber (1984). This work includes a discussion of the suggested programs of social action.

¹⁰ Nancy Fraser (1988) has shown how needs talk has been institutionalized as a major vocabulary of political discourse. She suggests that the interpretation of needs must be problematized. She contends that discourse on needs is not univocal and that there are various interpretations

a more active involvement in the identification of problems and needs. When they do, very few are aware of the role they play in the recognition of certain issues as problematic. Indeed, the influence of social technicians can be clearly discerned in the way some of the residents of the neighborhoods to be relocated think of themselves. Because social workers are the ones involved in the most frequent communicative exchanges, their influence is greater in the process of formation of social identities. However, they are not the sole agents contributing to this, they are simply reinforcing widespread images of the poor already held and expressed by dominant groups. I have found many examples of how the relocated population's understanding of the situation was influenced from above: more than one of my informants insisted on the need for being taught how to use the new houses; others believed that some of their neighbors "were so ignorant that they did not know how to get organized and that they needed somebody to tell them what to do." The gradual impoverishment and devaluation of self identities has overarching implications for the relocation process. It allows EBY's social workers and other staff members to take on the roles of teachers and guides without encountering resistance. The affected population did not instantaneously accept the position of "students" -the submission to EBY's will-; there were certain requirements

of them.

which had to be previously fulfilled. First, as analysts of power relations had long been noting, the EBY had to demolish its adversary -the communities and people it deals with¹¹- a process I have discussed in chapter four and earlier in this chapter. In this process, the people to be relocated became gradually weakened when they started to realize they could no longer use their traditional means of coping with everyday reality. Second, as Bauman has pointed, only after devaluation of the own -popular- culture and recognition of the superiority of that of the Other, could the population allow to be "gardened- cultivated."

Subordination to the management of their lives was also facilitated by the simultaneous authoritarian policies of a repressive national state which suppressed everything considered a popular expression. Through some exemplary actions in the neighborhoods, authorities could convey the idea that it was useless to take actions against the established order under the threat of being totally destroyed. Military authorities negated the possibilities of politically activism subjects by prohibiting every collective action and by physically exterminating some of

¹¹ Machiavelli (1953) wrote: "When those States, that are conquered as it is said, have been accustomed to live under their own Laws, and in liberty, there are three ways for a man to hold them. The first is to demolish all their strong places...(p.18) Similarly, Clausewitz (1968), the theorist of War, spoke of the "destruction of the enemy or rather, his fighting powers." When saying so, he did not confine this idea to the use of physical violence alone, but pointed to the importance of moral destruction as well (p.37).

the citizenry. In comparison to other sectors of the national society, repressive practices were only slightly felt in the Posadas lowland quarters. There were, however, a few grassroots leaders who disappeared or were imprisoned. Explicit references to the milicos and to the repression were very scarce during our field interviews. A militant Peronista from El Chaquito once told me his own case which shows that the actions of the armed forces were felt and had an effect at least among those more politically active. Casimiro recalled that a few years after the military coup a group of armed militiamen came to his house and ordered him to give them his identity document. After he had done so, they told him to repeat his name and while he was obeying to this command, they tore his document into pieces and said: "Who had you said you were? Well, now you are nobody." Such an action had many implications: it meant the likelihood of the physical disappearance of the grass root leader in the near future, for anybody who was stopped in the street and caught without a document, immediately became a suspect and could be either arrested or killed. With this action they threatened him and his followers with death and voided their right to be citizens and persons.

During the years of El Proceso EBY had its own secret security services operating in the areas to be relocated. They controlled the movements of the residents and did not allow outsiders to approach the population without they had

a special permission. Thus, the national state and EBY often coincided in the control of the population, in the negation of individual identities and in the view of community behavior as pathological. As already seen, in the eyes of most of the people to be relocated EBY and the state were one and the same thing; it should not surprise us then, that their disciplinary practices are at the origins of the passivity of the population. But a passive behavior does not imply an absence of conflict. There is no active response because the prohibition to organize meetings and the negation of social identity inhibits the generation of a common project with which to fight against the established order.

With the Yacyretá project, identities were greatly affected but not irreversibly damaged. Names, houses, subsistence resources, and forms of social organization became only temporarily suspended. While this discontinuity persisted, people's need of supervision increased. Such is the case of those who already moved to the new houses. Insofar the majority of them had not yet obtained the deeds of their new residences, Yacyretá continues to be the legal proprietor of all houses. As long as this situation remains unchanged, the subordinate and dependent role of the population will endure.

Yacyretá's practices will continue to reinforce the powerlessness of the subject population while it maintains

the control of decisive resources. Throughout the years, the EBY reserved for itself the control of strategic resources. The most powerful among those was probably the ability to dispose of people's identities. This is an aspect many analysts of power relations have emphasized: the role played in the struggle for the formation of subjects¹². The EBY became a mediator or grantor of:

- 1) The condition of "relocation beneficiary."
- 2) The Argentine residence or nationality to the foreign born residents of the neighborhoods, mainly Paraguayans.
- 3) The Argentine endorsement of identity through the issuing of personal identity documents.
- 4) The acquisition of "morally accepted" standards through the legal registration of marital unions.
- 5) Access to the standardized official culture and language through literacy programs and special labor training.
- 6) Acquisition of the status of owner.

Besides these institutionalized practices, the EBY's staff members performed other actions that affected the identities of the relocated population. They took away from the population the right to control certain spaces, even those as private as the household domain. The private realm of the house was indeed greatly affected: from the prohibition of

¹² Althusser (1971) was the first to propose this with regards to the mechanics of interpellation, through which ideology is said to constitute individuals as subjects. See also: Laclau(1977), de Ipola(1983), Larrain(1983), Smith(1988), Therborn (1980)

the free use of the building itself-including repairs, sale or moving of the structure-, to the establishment of its exchange value. The reproduction of the household was also hindered insofar Yacyretá would only recognize those registered in the 1979 Census. Ten years have passed since then, and the children of yesterday have become adults who have taken mates; many of these couples have children already. Yacyretá calls them *hogares derivados*, new households derived from the original unit. So far, the name is the only thing they have, because Yacyretá does not recognize them as beneficiaries.

So far, I have discussed how Yacyretá and the population to be relocated become positioned through their interaction. Asymmetry of the positions in the dialogical set formed by Yacyretá and the people should by now be apparent. One, Yacyretá, is depicted as a provider of goods and as a controller of selves; as an omnipotent entity, capable of disposing of life and death and of imposing its will even on somebody as grandiose as the Pope. The other component, the people, is seen as ignorant, amoral, abnormal, a close-to-nature being, an object that needs to be regulated and tamed. The extreme asymmetry of the relationship greatly inhibits communication. As objects and as part of nature, the residents of the lowland areas of Posadas are left voiceless.

The positions I have already discussed, are not solely

determined by Yacyretá (taken as a unit) or by the population. There are other actors who take part, either transitorily or permanently, in the communicative practices of the relocation process and who influence the acquisition of particular identities. Among them, the various staff members of Yacyretá played the most important roles.

CHAPTER SIX: YACYRETA STAFF

EBY's professionals and technicians became positioned not only through their interaction with the displaced population, but also through their daily encounters with other staff members. The positioning within the relocation agency was and still is greatly influenced by those other positions already occupied in the larger society. The agency constitutes an arena where previous identities are asserted, although simultaneously contested.

This chapter attempts to show that EBY is not an homogeneous organization in which members share the same goals regarding relocation. Differences among members stem from their professional and/or technical training, their class ascription, and previous experience in the region where the hydroelectric dam is under construction. In the following pages, I will be describing struggles among staff members and will analyze how internal conflicts affect communication in the project.

Misioneros and Parachutists Working at EBY

Existing conflicts, such as those between the local and outsiders, were replicated internally once individuals

joined EBY. While some professionals were recruited locally, others came from the center -Buenos Aires- or from other large cities viewed nearly as powerful as the capital. As a rule, the professions represented in the group of the **parachutists** (see chapter two), the derogatory name employed to identify outsiders, are simultaneously the most socially prestigious, traditional and well established, as is the case of law and engineering. In the beginning of the project, the status of these latter specialists at EBY was also economically advantageous, an issue that was the cause of bitter resentment among local employees. For years, the outsiders had been receiving a larger income which covered moving expenses and rent in Posadas, as well as other fringe benefits. All of this was extended in compensation for what they called **uprooting**¹.

In contrast, most of the specialists working in the PRAS, the Program of Relocation and Social Action, were recruited in Posadas. This was so because the World Bank made the granting of loans conditional upon the implementation of a social program which should include the hiring of social scientists. This bank favored those already working in the capital of Misiones because they met the institution's qualifications. The National University of

¹ Posadas city is considered to be in an unfavorable zone because living expenses are higher than at other locations in Argentina. National agents appointed to this city generally receive the equivalent of what Americans call combat pay.

Misiones and the Department of Planning, at that time a very technocratic and influential governmental office, were also very active in negotiating the participation of local experts. However, the PRAS, generally identified by other staff members with the vague term of the social, was not fully Misionero.

The social workers generally claimed Misionero identity and argued that only those who were born in the province were capable of understanding "their people." One of them, the supervisor García once told me that when the PRAS was being formed he insisted that they should hire local professionals and technicians while one of the anthropologists favored the contract of personnel with the best qualifications, no matter where they came from. Most of the social workers were born and graduated in the province. The sociologists and the anthropologists were in a more ambiguous situation for nobody recognized them as truly locals, although most of them taught at the National University and had been living in Posadas for years. They lacked the credentials to be Misioneros: they were neither sons or daughters of the land of the red soil, neither they held a degree granted by a local institution. The anthropologist Guillermo Olivera was an exception to this. He was born in Misiones and was related to many well known local families. However, he was not seen as a true Misionero because he had been away from the province for too long: he

left the region as a child, attended to school in Buenos Aires, and obtained a doctoral degree abroad.

In the Yacyretá Relocation Agency, distinctions made among staff members in terms of the opposition of the region to the national state generally overlapped with class differentials. In fact, many of the lawyers did not see any great difference among members of the various local social classes. They looked upon all Misioneros, and consequently to members of EBY's social sector, with the same disdain and condescending attitude. After all, only among people working in that sector could one encounter the anomaly of an employee with the double identity of relocation beneficiary and staff member.

This was indeed the case of a social worker who was born and lived in El Chaquito all of her life. Her double ascription made her one of the more controversial figures of the project in the eyes of many former neighbors. One of them once told me while criticizing her: "A monkey dressed in silk, is still a monkey." Amazingly, to be able to put her down, he had to employ a rhetoric device used by dominant sectors to refer derogatorily to those trying to climb the ladder. The social worker's position at the EBY had always been a difficult. Her professional peers felt that EBY's authorities impaired the settlement of her relocation rights. They explained to me that EBY thought it better not to give her compensation money until all her

neighbors were relocated, to avoid suspicions of favoritism. According to her fellow workers, this decision had the opposite effect; neighbors would tell her: "How do you expect us to believe you, if you who work for them, were unable to get preferential treatment with relocation or compensation." Former neighbors would try to take advantage of acquaintanceship with her and would become harsh with her when they realized they would not be favored. She was one of the few of the EBY's staff they could identify by name and also one of the persons receiving the worst criticisms.

I have found that the population would make the worst complaints against the professionals they could more clearly identify and with whom they maintained more regular contacts. Besides this case of the social worker, there are a few others which illustrate this point. The most notorious is the one of the Gringo García, supervisor of the social workers, after whom a transitory relocation area was named. When asked about how this had happened, he recalled the event as follows:

We had to establish a transitory settlement. We could not call it Heller (it was implied that I should know that the factory had already been closed and that the owners had collected the compensation payment). So I said: "Call it García. You see, at that time I was sort of a personality. I was seen as the conductor of everything. But this did not last. To the Radicals and to some Peronists as well I was an irritant because I do not want them to be demagogues... First, we decided to call it Sergeant García because it matched with the military era. We invented that Sergeant García was my grandfather, we made up all this long story, we had a lot of fun. There were some people

that accused me of having my own neighborhood. His visibility in the neighborhood (to which he admits by saying that for some time he was a personality) contradicts what he also claims to be the ideal role of a supervisor. He maintains that, a supervisor in social work should basically stay in his consulting room, know all the field cases, give advice to the colleagues under his guidance, and pass unnoticed among the client population. In fact, he is one of the few staff members every neighbor remembers by name and is also one of the main targets of the population's suspicions and mistrust. This is particularly acute in the area in which he participated more actively, namely the García transitory settlement. There, most of the residents call him liar; some even believe that he is a thief. He is the object of much local gossip, both in the relocation areas, in EBY and in Posadas in general. He is not alone in this, anthropologists also became the targets of many rumors (see bellow).

There is a symmetry in the way the relocated population and EBY's staff portray each other; they reciprocally depict the other as a liar. Mutual distrust increased with uncertainty about the completion of the project. The relocated population says the staff members are liars because "they promise us things and then they change their minds." The major complaints are with regards to changes in the due date for relocation and with the monthly

installments on the houses which, at the beginning, they thought they would be getting for free. Conversely, at EBY, the anthropologists and lawyers admitted that the population may lie in matters such as their household data or in stating what others supposedly told them with the purpose of getting a bigger home or getting in motion faster relocation.

That the population may be involved in cheating and lying is not easily acknowledged by EBY's social workers, for open recognition might hinder their own professional positioning. Such an admission would imply that their expertise is ill fitted for predicting and preventing transgressions and this would undoubtedly hamper their professional prestige. For example, when I asked the social workers whether they have found that the relocation beneficiaries might declare more family members or a different income to get a bigger house or to pay less: they assured me that this was very unlikely. However, during my field work I observed various cases where the household composition was different from the one they declared and from what was registered in the blue folder.

Positioning devices

Bureaucratic organizations always define the desired roles of the various employees and place them within an institutionalized hierarchical structure. But the formal

positioning of actors does not necessarily correspond to the effective ability to mobilize resources or to "shape and modify desires and beliefs in a manner contrary to people's interests²." This is apparent in the Yacyretá Relocation Agency. At EBY, actors use -and are conditioned- by a multiplicity of positioning devices at their disposal which either modify or reinforce their previous identities and the formal status granted by EBY's authorities. The importance of each of these devices is permanently redefined in accordance with changes occurring in the larger context in which the hydroelectric project is being built. I will analyze just how a few of them are used: 1) Knowledge, 2) Space and Time, 3) Linguistic resources, 4) Networks.

1- Knowledge struggles

Knowledge as a power device may be understood in various ways. It can allude to general information, taken as a neutral whole of data with a univocal meaning; or it may refer to a specific ensemble of related notions developed in a particular field of enquiry. At the relocated agency, we can observe struggles among the various professional groups involving these two senses of knowledge.

1-1 Knowledge as information

² This corresponds to Lukes' (1986:10) three dimensional view of power which maintains that power "may operate to shape and modify desires and beliefs in a manner contrary to people's interests."

As far as the first kind of knowledge is concerned, staff members believe that the larger the amount of knowledge, the greater the control of the situation they would have. This belief became apparent to me when I interviewed the various staff members. A common complain among those in the PRAS was their disinformation. On occasions, the social workers told me, even the people to be relocated knew more than they did. More than once, the Entity would instruct them to work with a particular sector without explaining the purposes involved. On their arrival to the affected neighborhoods, the household heads would insist that their move was imminent because the building contractor needed the area to be cleared for works related to the bridge or to the railway. At first, the social workers interpreted that what the residents had reported was a product of their imagination and an expression of their willingness to leave. But a week later, EBY authorities officially informed PRAS members that they would have to tell the population about the displacement. They thought that a few of the beneficiaries were better informed through working for the contractors in charge of the construction of complementary works. It was enough that one neighbor heard the news, to have them spread in seconds all over the entire community. The social workers agreed that their ignorance of relevant information which the population already knew made them lose credibility and affected their work.

Who was in control of this general information and why and how it was withheld or used in decision making was very often expressed in very vague terms. Professionals from all areas -be it lawyers, social workers, sociologists, anthropologists- occupying relatively subordinate positions, could only identify a vague "they" or the "entity" as the source of decisions and orders.

Felipe Cruz, a former lawyer at EBY, remembered that "they" would ask for legal reports to be submitted immediately to Buenos Aires. They were never told neither who needed the information nor what it was for, He suggested that it was somebody in Posadas who actually required that work. In general, very few of EBY employees know who is responsible for making final decisions related to relocation priorities or who decides which information can be released. Formally, most of the decisions must be made in the Buenos Aires headquarters by unknown EBY's officials. This is the way people in Posadas, both at EBY and at the province, interpret the decision making procedures. Undoubtedly, the head of EBY Posadas must play a role in those decisions. But nobody seems to be totally aware of how much he can influence the outcomes. Evidently, ignorance of the subordinate staff members of the range of their boss's powers, enables him to displace and attribute all the unwelcome orders to an insensitive and foreign center of which they are passive victims. Once, Sara, one of the

members of the professional staff of Coproya, made a distinction between decision makers in EBY's central headquarters and the Posadas professional groups. She criticized the "callousness and lack of understanding of the situation of authorities determining the policies in the capital city." And on the other hand, she praised the actions of the local staff because their reading of the "objective" data provided by the Census of 1979 and other studies was more aware of the social realities of the Posadas quarters. Her comments illustrate one problem that advocates of the free flow of information ignore when they see it as a guarantor of a more egalitarian participation of the people and as a means of empowerment. They do not see that there is more than one reading of the same information and that it may be used in various ways. Neither do they realize that information alone does not ensure a more favorable position in the institution. Indeed, among the professionals in EBY Posadas, the anthropologists and the sociologists controlled much information and so did their assistants. But some of this knowledge was useless when it came to make certain decisions. When the project started, the various professionals and technicians of the PRAS had a fairly good picture of the boundaries of the neighborhoods, of social networks within them, of how people used the household space. Notwithstanding, they had no voice when the areas were artificially divided in accordance to engineering

needs. They could not say much when lines following technical priorities separated neighbors who were involved in diadic relations. And only with very strategic action, could the anthropologists avoid the construction of apartment buildings for relocation. To succeed in this, they had to carefully screen which of EBY's sectors and individuals could be gained as allies when they argued for the construction of individual house units.

In examining Chile under Pinochet's regime, Lechner notes that in such an authoritarian context in which secrecy is dominant, the release of greater information would not prevent the development of uncertainty. On the contrary, he says: "the more information gets accumulated, the more suspicions emerge on that which is occult (1986:132)." The same happens in the Yacyretá case, both with the population and the staff: they generally suspect they are not told the truth and that the others are hiding information.

There had been good reasons to think likewise. In 1980-1981, there were serious doubts about the continuity of the project. EBY authorities decided to reduce the personnel and gradually fired the majority of the social workers. These years are remembered as the more dramatic ones in the history of the project. Every social worker emphasized how that uncertainty hindered their work in the field because they had no answers. What worried them was not so much

knowing the possible outcome of the project and therefore of relocation, but rather, whether they-the social workers- and the population would be permitted to become effective constituents of the dialogical set. In other words, the problem was not so much -as is generally stated and as they express it- a confrontation between already constituted actors, struggling to have access to strategic information which may facilitate their access to a more dominant position within the institution. The true concern was with the renewal of their contracts. What was at stake was their same existence within the bureaucratic structure.

During the first years, EBY, did not hire the personnel directly. The majority of the employees joined the relocation agency through short term contracts made with Harza, the consultant firm (see chapter 3). Through this mechanism, no employee was ever sure of continuity in the organization and hence, of being fully an EBY's staff member.

1-2 Professional knowledge struggles

Besides trying to gain control over the official knowledge of EBY and thus asserting the right of becoming part of it, professionals also get involved in another ongoing struggle, one that is related to the specific kinds of knowledge generated and controlled by each profession. Each professional group at EBY claims to have the right of defining what or who is affected and assert they possess the

most adequate instruments of knowledge to deal with resettlement.

The lawyers, Felipe Cruz, Diego Díaz Navarro, and José María Peña, agree that those of the "social" do not use the words properly. Felipe Cruz noted that lawyers and social workers used to define proprietors differently and that the same occurred with the words intruder and occupant. Lawyers, he said, are concerned with accuracy of terms, whereas social workers are not. According to the lawyers, the proprietor is the one who owns the title deed (titular de dominio) of the affected real estate. Only the individuals whose deeds are officially registered may be considered proprietors. The anthropologists at EBY define proprietors exactly in the same way.

Whereas anthropologists and lawyers adopted an already authorized and codified definition on ownership, the social workers utilized emic concepts to discriminate the cases they encountered in the field work. Thus, they registered as owners every individual who self ascribed himself/herself to that category. To the social worker, it did not matter whether they had the deed or simply, a sales contract, as long as the people identified themselves as owners. In addition, PRAS professionals and technicians also distinguish between owner of the plot and owner of

improvements.³ Lawyers maintain that this distinction is hard to sustain because "the real estate is everything, there is no such a thing as an owner of improvements. If somebody is willing to get a credit on the improvements, they must first be recognized by the owner of the plot." Although lawyers negate the legal existence of owners of improvements, they had to go along with that category because EBY was committed to grant some compensation money to those who claimed to own the structure of the house. Unable to impose their concepts on the matter, they still think they succeeded in having the last word. The lawyers say that it was them who developed the best solution for these situations, they created a "fiction", as they call it. They decided to act as mediators between land proprietors and the affected population who declared to own the structures. The purpose of these meetings was to convince owners of plots to recognize the rights of the latter.

Besides arguing over the concept of ownership, lawyers and social workers did not agree with what they understood by intruder. To the social workers, an intruder is everybody who came to live to the relocation areas after the 1979 Census; to the lawyers, it is anybody occupying land without the mediation of any legal arrangement with the owner.

³ I use the word improvement for the Spanish word "mejoras" which refers to any construction, fence, plant or tree incorporated to the plot.

At the Relocation Agency each participant in the confrontation for the imposition of meanings accuses the other of being competitive and of lacking understanding. Each, also says that they have to frame things in a simple way for the other to understand. Finally, each of them considers his/her own profession more necessary than the others.

The lawyer José María Peña thinks he managed not to reveal to me his conflicts with the majority of the personnel of the PRAS. He confided to another person at EBY that he hid those problems from me during the interview. However, he had ignored the fact that as a friend of people connected to EBY, I would eventually learn about his deliberate lack of candor. Despite his evasions, his statements were immediately transparent and exposed his animosity towards the PRAS:

It must be done with those with those from bellow (he is referring to the PRAS that is located downstairs). Sometimes it had happened...things get messed up...Problems of competition may develop. They award the house, but it is us who pass judgement. It is me, the one who says who the owner is. I consider it is very important to have an optimal communication with the sector of urban relocation. I think it is working. It flows better. Differences among us have nothing to do with the main problem.

Mary, a blonde social worker who everybody calls the "Ukrainian," made similar remarks. According to her colleagues, she had the hardest time with the lawyers. With regards to the relationship with the legal experts, she

said:

At the beginning it was very hard to coordinate everything with the legal sector...now, we work all right. There are still some problems, like professional jealousy. For example, there was no coordination of activities. They would not call us when they held meetings with the population to reach agreements with regards to expropriation. We came to know afterwards. When they get together to decide the legal issues involving expropriation, they forget to tell us. We did not understand, it was hard...It is this jealousy which develops. We would use a term which was not the proper one. As time passed, they understood. The legal part is extremely difficult. There is no difference in understanding. Maybe they do not like our word. We would say to "take" and they would say to "possess." We do not have the same language with the legal sector. They thought they could solve everything. Only after some time, they realized that they must work in a team."

Julia, another social worker, said they sometimes realized that some beneficiaries were no longer legally affected and that others had already been paid compensation when they visited the households. She felt that the population looked at them as idiots because they ignored these events. Julia, just like Mary, insisted that they should be present when compensation is being negotiated because, after all:

We, social workers are the ones who really know the composition of the household. They may say they are single and in reality, they are legally married but live in a separate house than their companions. We know those things, we are better informed. We may make them tell the truth.

According to Julia, it is in these encounters with the lawyers with the purpose of reaching agreements with the beneficiaries, where they confirm there is no communication. She attributes this to the arrogance of lawyers.

Officially, Yacyretá develops policies on behalf of the so called beneficiaries. In practice, there is little agreement on who benefits or even more, whether Yacyretá is supposed to deal with a thing - a piece of property-, with a collective - a household- or with individuals. Following, there are some examples of the various meanings different specialists assign to the notion of beneficiary:

Lawyers: Legally, they deal with title holders who may be an individual, a family or a trade's name. In addition, they also include comodatarios (individuals with a right of usufruct or comodatum), occupants and tenants, provided these individuals were already living in the area when the Census was taken.

Sociologists: They speak of registration units which correspond to the households. They are not concerned with the individual cases, but rather, with finding regularities among the units so as to characterize the population in general.

Social workers: They share the same identification number of each registration unit used by the other professionals of the PRAS (sociologists, anthropologists). However, when speaking about their work, they say they deal with cases pertaining to individual family groups. In their interaction, they generally talk to the family heads. They know everybody by name and insist that each case is unique and deserves a differential treatment.

Surveyors: They say that what is affected is the plots. They identify affected units which they distinguish in accordance to the cadastral divisions. They proudly say that they work with spatial units which are invariable with time and can be easily recognized geographically.

Anthropologists: Although using the terms beneficiary, units of registry and households, which are (respectively) part of the official language of EBY and the PRAS, they employ other terms borrowed from the conceptual apparatus of their discipline and the social sciences. This is apparent in their reports, both in the ones designed for the exclusive use of EBY and the Banks financing the project, and in those addressed to the academic audience. In these works, the so called beneficiaries become domestic units, the urban poor, the marginados and urban squatters.

Undoubtedly, these differences in the conceptualization of the object or subject of the relocation program reflect the theoretical framework of each discipline. They may also express the way each professional interacts with the relocated population in accordance to their formal status and role expectations within EBY's bureaucracy. Finally, they reveal conflicts among professions, many of which are prior to the dam project. The anthropologists, for example, occupy hierarchical positions requiring the planning, coordination and monitoring of the relocation program. They are not expected to go to the field and to be in close

contact with the population. This factor becomes combined with the professional training and orientation preferences within the discipline, emphasizing: theory over practice, the analysis of the "social" over the "individual," a belief in empirically grounded rational science as the basis for policies as opposed to action guided by intuition. As a result, anthropologists at EBY produce a depiction of the affected population which is more abstract and general than the one generated by the social workers. Each of these two professions are supposed to perform different roles in the project. The anthropologists (together with the sociologists), are held responsible for the conversion of the population into a matter liable of instrumental, rationally oriented handling. Through their expertise, they typify, categorize, mathematize the population, although sometimes adding qualitative overtones. Once this is accomplished, they predict possible outcomes and suggest a course of action. It is only then, that the social workers are summoned. They are to be the executors of somebody else's plans, those produced by the social science theorists. Following Bauman's (1987) metaphor, they are the gardener's of a garden designed, legitimized, and generated by others.

The opposition between theoretically or practically oriented action is at the origins of most of the mutual criticisms constantly heard in the most diverse settings of

Posadeño society. Social workers and anthropologists meet each other at the National University of Misiones and in various sectors of the provincial government. Social workers discredit anthropologists by saying they are always theorizing and that they cannot come down to earth the ground. They maintain that anthropologists are unable to give solutions to practical, concrete problems. But when anthropologists attempt to take an active role in local social problems, they accuse them of invading territories. Conversely, anthropologists say that the relationship between social work and anthropology ranks equally with that of nursing and medicine. Many anthropologists blame on university training the poor performance of social workers. They believe that as students progress in their studies they are increasingly brainwashed, they become less and less interested in thinking and reading.

Because there exists such division of labor at EBY and so different views on the role played by theory and practice and by specific kinds of knowledge, we could expect that anthropologists and sociologists share their views and make alliances to counterbalance the practice of social workers. We could also expect that those with a more "scientifically" oriented training would favor expert knowledge and probably encourage authoritarian models of social intervention; and that those with a more "intuitive" approach prefer the neopopulist models. What happens in reality is more complex.

Alliances are unstable and may greatly vary depending on the issues under discussion and on political changes occurring at a local and national level. During the military years, anthropologists, social workers and sociologists were at permanent risk because for the repressive regime, the subtle distinctions among the disciplines did not exist: everything "social" was regarded as subversive. Thus, in these specific conjunctures, specialists in the social sciences made temporary alliances to face accusations. However, biases against each other's profession remained. Social workers remember that there was a time they had to avoid being noticed by the new councilors and directors coming from Buenos Aires -most of them former armed forces officials or protegeés of the central state military authorities-.⁴ If any of them realized there were still people working in the social area, they would immediately try to fire them. Similar stories are recalled by the anthropologists and sociologists who were accused by the secret services of being communists. Therefore, against the military, they had to unite. It became a different story when democracy was restored in Argentina. As soon as civil authorities took office, most of the political parties stated their position with regards to Yacyretá. At EBY,

⁴ In 1979, three out of seven members representing Argentina at the Administrative Council of Yacyretá were retired officers of the armed forces. One, was a rear admiral; another one was a commodore and the third one was a colonel.

professional staff members started to openly declare their political affiliation and to be active members of the parties. One, the social worker García was a prominent local figure in the Peronist party. Another one, an anthropologist, became a scientific figure of the ruling Radical party. Their technical and political discourse increasingly fused. What they advocated was not new, but it acquired a greater political meaning. Although the Peronist technician has always been in favor of policies emerging from the bottom up, popular participation and grass root groups, he started to praise them more strongly with the advent of political times. Rather than being guided by academic concerns on these topics, he did not hesitate to admit that his interest was more pragmatic. He once told me, for example, probably assuming that I was a Peronist sympathizer, that he was encouraging some agreements between the provincial government and EBY to offer various literacy and labor training courses. "You see, he said, we need them to do some political work."

On the other hand, the anthropologist, Guillermo Olivera, has always seen scientific knowledge as an asset, both with regards to himself and others. He is the only professional at EBY holding a PhD degree from a foreign university. This fact has given him respectability both at a local and at a national level; it has also been the source of much of the animosity against him. Being unable to

compete against his qualifications, a common strategy among the rest of the professionals is to say that foreign higher degrees are of no use when it comes to understand local reality. They also maintain that he produces beautiful writings to please the banks but what his nice works propose, are never put into practice. In public presentations of EBY's social programs and in many of his articles, he repeatedly insisted that social programs should not "reproduce poverty" and was also critical about participatory views, arguing that people do not always know the best technical and economical solutions. By saying this, he was responding to commonly held perspectives that by praising the "poor" contribute to maintain him/her in a subordinate and dependent position.

As time passed and political factionalism started to impinge upon every sphere of social activity, the opposed views of these two professionals became increasingly meshed with their political affiliation. This is because Argentina's political culture tends to identify disciplinary approaches with politico-ideological orientations. According to a widespread view, the Radicals are said to be technocrats, to praise science, to be internationalist and to lack understanding of the common people. Peronists, on the contrary, are believed to be on the side of the underdog, to be nationalist and to rely heavily on "life" experience rather than authoritative expertise. These

stereotypes are enhanced to devalue those who subscribe to one or the other perspective in accordance to what becomes more fashionable at a specific political conjuncture. In reality, nobody is truly so much concerned about the optimal orientation for social action; what is under discussion is what credentials should be considered valid to fulfill certain roles at EBY. To weaken the adversary, each chooses a discourse that is assumed to be politically correct. This selection is partly deliberate and partly informed by their habitus. When each perspective is enforced, the actions are far from coinciding with what their proponents or detractors claim. Instead of waiting for grass root organizations to form spontaneously and develop their own initiatives, once they become organized; the social workers' general supervisor at EBY, pressures the staff to motivate the creation of neighborhood commissions. On the other hand, the supposedly insensitive measures devised from the top down by the anthropologist are sometimes more concerned about the welfare of the people than those proclaimed by defendants of the bottom up perspective. Such is the case of his insistence on providing good housing and encouraging the improvement of the beneficiaries labor situation instead of defending their way of life. Very correctly, the anthropologists at EBY interpreted the cultural traits they observed not as a manifestation of an original culture that people would like

to preserve, but as an adaptive response to the conditions of extreme poverty which the prevailing relations of production forced them into. It must be noted, that neither of the two professionals totally adheres to any of these poles. This is apparent both in their actions and in their statements. The anthropologist may occasionally see the advantages of participation in certain stages of projects and the social worker may praise technical expertise as he manifested to me in the interviews and wrote in his papers.

In some way or another, every specialist attempts to present his/her own field, but also his/her own personal action as the most necessary and influential. Because the relocation procedures encountered with cases not contemplated in Argentine jurisprudence, specifically those related to squatters and the lack of title deeds, lawyers proudly say they had to prepare legal briefs to guide judicial decisions. The anthropologist Guillermo Olivera, is the only one claiming to have higher qualifications than the lawyers, and expresses this by saying that more than once, he had to prepare briefs himself to solve complex cases. Lawyers, anthropologists, and surveyors feel more knowledgeable and thus, superior, than the provincial counterparts. They all comment that they had to explain to bureaucratic officials how to deal with matters related to EBY because they totally ignore the basic facts.

Competition between sectors and professional groups at

EBY is not only expressed in dialogical disputes over theoretical and practical orientations, planning strategies, styles of social intervention, and over the right to define the object of policies in the last instance; it is also apparent in the attempt to safeguard the material production of each group. Each group produces information on the affected households (or plots) which is kept in individual folders stored in files. The information thus produced is controlled as if it were the private property of the producers. Social workers have their own folders in their own office. The Research and Program Design section keeps the Census 1979 records, some of that data is computerized and other is still in the protocols. The lawyers have their own legal written data and so do the surveyors who elaborate what they call a "technical folder." When the OIR, an Office of Information and Claims was closed, the head of EBY Posadas retained all the gathered reports which summarized the population's demands and concerns with regards to the project. Engineer Pérez would never share this data with the anthropologist, a fact that the latter always resented.

Every group attempts to have access to the other's files. Sometimes this is done compulsively as it once happened with the social workers files. The head of the lawyers, then, uncontested and feared within the informal power structure of EBY Posadas, simply ordered to surrender the files and they had no other choice than to give them to

him.

Through keeping data about the population in this compartmentalized manner, they contribute to construct a fragmented beneficiary. Above, we have seen that each group defines what and who is affected with regards to very different attributes and thus seems to speak about a different object/subject. Here, we see how this is enforced and encouraged through never allowing to totally bring together the written description of such attributes so as to define a unified entity: a unitarian, a whole beneficiary with a univocal meaning for all.

There are have been various attempts to concentrate all the data in one office and to have a common data bank. Most failed because nobody was willing to give away their symbolic capital (see Bourdieu 1982, 1988). While I was doing field work, EBY bought new computers and was ready to try to centralize all the information once more. As it appears, the original idea of having this sector under the supervision of the PRAS had failed. It was apparent that it was soon going to become another semiautonomous area which would also claim the rights over the various EBY's records. But, at least during the first months of existence of this division, its members were unable to ensure free access to files from all sectors. Not surprisingly, they could never make the lawyers facilitate their files for processing, something that was by no means a new response of these

specialists. Attorneys have always negated the access to their documentation with the argument it was private. An ex EBY employee commented on this, "they kept everything in secret, they would not disclose anything. I do not know why they did so, after all, everything will be covered by the water."

2- Space and time

In the formal organization of EBY, the legal sector of Posadas is independent from the Department of Infrastructure and Urban Relocation. It directly responds to the legal area in Buenos Aires. Lawyers autonomy has greatly contributed to the freedom of action and ability to impose their will they have enjoyed throughout the slow relocation process. These professionals were particularly powerful during the military years, when the head of their sector in the central headquarters had greater authority than the general Director⁵.

In Posadas, the lawyers "superiority" is not only conveyed through their behavior as already shown, but it is also expressed spatially. The use of space distances legal professionals from EBY's staff and from the population and

⁵ Botana's (1982) book summarizes the first years of the dam project. The book is plenty of gossiping and the author does not disguise his sympathies for one of the groups searching for full control of EBY. The role played by the Financial Director and by the Juridical Director is discussed in detail. Particularly revealing is the discussion of the connections of these characters with the military hierarchy.

hence contributes to the representation of them as unreachable. The legal practitioners occupy the upper floor of the EBY's building, while the PRAS, the administrative and technical staff, in other words, "the rest", are all underneath. In speaking, attorneys enforce their spatial-professional superiority, by referring to "the ones, or those bellow." This spatial differentiation is also experienced as symbolic violence by other professionals. The rest of EBY's staff see the higher physical position as a symbol that stands for their differences in power within the Relocation Agency. They comment "differences with the ones above are not only limited to a question of having the office on the upper on the lower floors."

Everybody at EBY accuses the lawyers of constituting "feuds", of creating totally isolated spaces. As opposed to the space of the social sector, where anybody can reach the personnel without being previously announced; in the legal sector, there is a secretary who screens visitors, controls access, and reserves to herself the right to determine who is worthy of being granted an appointment. Besides this, while the offices downstairs have glass windows and the staff can be seen from the corridor, the lawyers have opaque glasses and therefore they cannot be watched.

By controlling the space where expropriation and compensation is settled and discussed, lawyers enjoy a favorable position which enables them to condition the way

communicative practices occur in such setting. First, they generally decide when, where, and who may participate in such encounters. Second, they largely determine who is given voice and for what purposes. To counterbalance the lawyers claims over this space, social workers make use of the space where they reign: the neighborhoods and the private realm of the household. Only when the importance of knowledge on these latter spaces is recognized, are social workers admitted into the space dominated by the lawyers. But even on the occasions when they are "invited" to take part in the negotiation meetings, their participation is still regulated by the attorneys. The same as space, time may sometimes be deliberately used as a device to assert authority. Those enjoying a power position have the control of appointments and can make people wait as they wish.

3- Linguistic resources

There are various linguistic resources certain actors put at work at EBY so as to enforce their position in the institution and to devalue the role of other staff members. Among those mechanisms, I have chosen a few to show how they operated in the Relocation Agency. Hence, I will discuss the way forms of address, nicknaming, speech genres and specific ownership of meanings are employed for such purposes.

3-1 Forms of address

There is an institutionalized way of addressing in which each professional staff member is called by their

university degree and family name. This is the way the administrative and security personnel refers to the staff members when somebody from the neighborhoods to be relocated comes to EBY. This is probably the reason why the beneficiaries speak of the "licenciadas" and the "engineers."

Although as I discussed above, sociologists, anthropologists and social workers have their professional disputes; they use very colloquial forms of address in their interaction. They call each other by name and use the form *vos* for the second person singular, which expresses hierarchical equality and easy access to the person thus addressed. This familiarity reveals that, despite their disagreements they still constitute a group with commonality of interests. At least this is the way the others think of them when they call them the *sociales* (those dealing with the social).

On the contrary, lawyers address the others very formally and expect to be reciprocated in the same way. Through this, they maintain and put the others into a distant position.

3-2 Nicknaming

Nicknaming is a common practice observed in Argentina at highly formalized settings such as bureaucratic organizations. It is a form of labelling that serves to grant the position the nicknamers feel the person truly

deserves and through this, disqualify the one officially held. It is then, an expression of how the person is represented by the other members of the organization. An interesting aspect of this labelling system, is that is not always apparent, and it requires a story to unfold the occult meaning. The social worker García began to be identified as fresh bread after the Peronists won the provincial elections and took office. When somebody hears this kind of nicknaming, he must ask the reason why the person is called in such a way. As a reply, the initiated gets another part of the story. In this case: "Fresh bread, because he has come out of the oven."⁶ With this they mean: "He has just left." The latter is the answer anybody would get when he is not at work and they are trying to reach him. Since elections, he has been an adviser to the Secretary of Education and is generally away from EBY for many hours.

The unreachable head of the lawyers in Posadas to whom I could never talk is the Feudal Lord, because "once he lifts the drawbridge nobody can go across." The anthropologist in charge of the PRAS is the man on the spaceship, because he never lands on earth. During the first years of the project, he and another anthropologist were also called Batman and Robin, a more public and less

⁶ In Spanish, they say "porque está recién salido." Speakers play with the meanings of the verb salir, which are translatable as "to come out of", and also as "to go, to leave."

derogatory nickname.

Throughout the long, and so many times postponed, process of relocation, there were other mechanisms of labelling generally generated in what is called the *usina de rumores* (rumor producing factory) of the secret services. The main targets were the social scientists of whom they rumored things pertaining both to their private life and to their political affiliation. The most common labels were: "womanizers", "drug addicts", and "organizers of black parties." The favorite of all was, surely, "communists." By using the latter, the producers of rumors marked and isolated the carriers of such label and made them dangerous at the eyes on any possible interlocutor. These derogatory labels discredited the staff and also warned it that somebody was watching. The message was: "Whoever wants to misbehave, would immediately be in trouble." Not all these rumors and labels necessarily stemmed from the plain clothed. Various staff members, mainly the lawyers, engineers and surveyors would echo or originate these images about the social scientists. When I first arrived to Posadas in 1980, I heard such rumors from a surveyor who no longer works there. The negative labelling was combined with critical remarks on the practical use of any social study. The discourse of these professionals was -and still is- very similar, if not the same, to that of the paramilitary groups and armed forces in general. This is so because they have

all been exposed to the dominant ideology of the military years, have consumed it, and have identified themselves with it. What the "feudal lord" proclaims provides a good example of the ideological identity of the regime discourse and that of some of the attorneys and technical staff at EBY. His comments, I obtained through confidences of his adversaries: "He says without any remorse that all subversives should be killed and he openly supported and justified the repressive practices of the military regime."

I also observed that the relocated population shared rumors and framed them in the same way as told to me by my informants at EBY. They all insinuated that there is a "black legend" of Yacyretá. When the secret services refer to it, they mean that some of the Posadas and Ituzaingó's EBY employees have been involved in contraband, a fact that sometimes also appeared in articles in local newspapers such as El Territorio from Misiones, and El Litoral from Corrientes. Incidentally, preoccupation with contraband has always been an argument to call the attention of national authorities so as to encourage a closer surveillance of those living in this national frontier (see chapter two). When they told me about this black legend in El Chaquito and in Heller, residents alluded to corrupt employees getting bribes though promising preferential treatment on the granting of houses. They also referred to staff members getting smuggled goods from Paraguay through the good

offices of paseras who resided in the affected areas. One of the professionals who hinted the existence of this bad history happened to be the target of many of the population's charges. In his account, the black legend pointed at the persecutions, and breaches of trust promoted and executed by secret services.

3-3 Speech genres and specific ownership of meaning

Anthropologists have observed that groups intending to distinguish themselves from others make use of secret languages to maintain themselves separate.⁷ This contributes to enforce collective identities. In Yacyretá, it is undoubtedly the lawyers who make use of their own, exclusive, private and yet, public language. When speaking about legal cases, they constantly employ Latin words. Nearly always, the addressee ignores the meaning. With these words, they behave in the same manner they have been trained to deal with the law: "no common citizen can claim ignorance of the law." But the common citizen neither knows the law nor the Latin words. However, he feels intimidated to ask. Doña Celeste, from San Cayetano, told me: "They speak to us with all those difficult words, and what can we do if we are

⁷ Bellman notes that for some authors there is a difference between secrecy and privacy: while secrecy alludes to the concealment of something negatively valued by the excluded audience, privacy refers to a way of protecting behaviors that are either morally neutral or seen as positive both by that who hides and by society as well. He prefers to define secrecy in a way that it encompasses both secrecy and privacy, as the calculated concealment of information, whether positive, negative or neutral (1984:4).

brutish?" They situate themselves vis a vis their interlocutors by demonstrating the other's ignorance through the manipulation of words. In the communication exchanges with the lawyers there is generally an ongoing struggle for establishing who has the authoritative speech. The advantage of the lawyers is that their speech genre is already socially constructed as legitimate and as normative. To invert this situation is difficult because it is not easy to find an alternative speech genre with which to reply. When I interviewed the attorneys, even with those who were my friends, I found myself in the disjunctive of admitting my ignorance of certain words and thus recognizing my "inferiority" or pretending I understood and then risking to finish the interview without knowing what it was about. This is what usually happens when people interacts with the attorneys. Their "secret" language creates a sense of complicity among the attorneys and unites them against all others. Through doing this, lawyers intimidate and devalue other employees at EBY, the relocated population, and the politicians they may interact with. They presume the "stupidity" of all common citizens, but never wonder the reason why they are not understood. Felipe Cruz, remembering his encounters with the vicegovernor, head of COPROYA, told me how "dumb" he was: "I told them again and again what the problem with the deeds was in El Chaquito. Even if I explained it to him in simple terms, he would never

understand. He would insist that it did not matter, that the province would solve everything." Surely enough, Felipe, the same as his professional peers, would never ask himself whether the concepts he uses truly have the univocal meaning the law profession claims for them. His attitude coincides with what Jackson, following Greimas and Landowski has noted with regards to legislative discourse:

Again, the fact that the legislation uses words which have their origin in the natural language, without (for the most part) explicitly defining them, conceals the function of the legislator in constructing the legal lexicon; it reinforces the conventional view (whose background lies in jurisprudential naturalism) that legal language exists prior to and independent of legislation, while legislation merely organizes that language and chooses the specific messages it will convey. Legal language, in reality a cultural construction, is itself made to appear natural, self-evident. The adoption of "explicit statement" as the arbitrary sign of membership of a legal system (the syntactic rule of the legal grammar) produces the appearance of a system characterized by public knowledge and lack of ambiguity; the grammar of other social semiotic systems, by contrast, remains implicit, underlying the discourse which it produces (1987:141).

While the attorneys assert the legitimacy of their discourse and consequently, of their profession, through presenting them as manifestations of the natural order, other professionals attempt to impose their own as deriving from a more accurate interpretation of the social reality they are working with. To the lawyers, their goal is not hard to achieve for it is indeed already attained, the larger society recognizes and rules the right of the legal profession to determine right and wrong. In reality, what

the lawyers attain is obedience to what is socially sanctioned but this does not mean that all participants think of the lawyers' meanings as valid. Hence, we have a professional group, the attorneys, who impose meanings to others by the recourse of the authority of their discipline to define any social matter.

On the other hand, there are professionals at EBY who possess a disciplinary discourse which is not socially sanctified. However, I have found, various specialists have adopted concepts pertaining to fields other than their own. There are then, experts who have the ability of showing the strength of their own discourse by imposing it on others. This process which is not intentionally pursued reveals the influence of specific positions and corresponding kinds of knowledge. Such is the case I observed that occurs with some anthropological concepts. When interviewing the PRAS staff, I found that more than one of the social workers and some of the research assistants of the Research and Program Design Section had borrowed terms employed by the anthropologist to characterize the behavior of the squatters to be relocated. The favored word was "adaptive strategy", although they also employed some others such as "marginals" or "domestic units". In parts of the text I obtained in an interview, these two words were used with some irony so as to minimize the strength of the concept and of its original producer; but in other parts of the same text, they would be

employed without involving a deliberate intention of the speaker.

Although occasionally, words may carry the power of having an effect over somebody's behavior; in most cases, such power depends on the position held by that who uses the term and not on the word itself. In fact, word and position mutually determine each other. Thus, the identity held by the speaker grants power to certain words and on the other hand, the fact that others adopt his/her meanings reinforces and is revealing of his/her position. On examining the texts obtained in the field, I have observed that the anthropologist influences EBY's employees, including the most distant ones such as the surveyors and lawyers, although in their case, his influence appears slightly blurred. The local press also adopts some of his terms as well as his characterizations of the population to be relocated.

As we have seen, the social worker García had the power of imposing his family name to a neighborhood, and since then, residents and EBY's staff employed it, even on official papers. Moreover, he also greatly contributed to the imposition or even was one of the main advocates of the favorite legitimizing word of the official presentation of the project: as a development program that aims at the social promotion of the population. Engineer Pérez always states on his public appearances and on press interviews

that the relocation program mainly pursues the social promotion of the population's welfare. García, and his professional colleagues have also reached the beneficiaries with this justification of the project. In many households, they explained to us that this was a "social" project. Although most of our informants consumed and consequently, employed the term, the majority did not seem to know what was meant by it.

4- Use of networks

The majority of EBY's staff has been appointed under the good auspices of a Godfather. An ex EBY staff member once described me this institution both as the place where everybody sends their protegeés and also as a refuge, a "freezer" where public figures can temporarily retreat until the cause they made them withdraw from a state post is forgotten.⁸ During the same interview, he said that in Posadas and also at the national level, there was an image of EBY as the great provider, a *vaca lechera* (a milking cow). Thus, everybody wanted to get a job there because it was also believed that they paid very well and in dollars. In Misiones, there are very few labor opportunities for certain professions. Quite often, the only possible employer is the provincial government which pays very low wages.

⁸ A case in point is that of the General Suárez Mason, one of the more questioned generals by human rights groups for his participation in torturing and kidnapping. When he left his military appointment, he was about to be named Executive Director of EBY. See articles in

Because of this, influential local and also national personalities, mainly politicians, seek for jobs for their acquaintances. Thus, among the personnel, we find ex wives and lovers of politicians, relatives of prominent national political figures whom their famous protectors would like to pass unnoticed because of their sexual preferences, and there are also relatives of former military Presidents and Military generals. In Yacyretá, we find successive "layers" of employees representing the successive political regimes.

Many of the confrontations among the various staff members are related to the way each member was recruited and also to which are the supporting networks sustaining them. Dialogue with each individual employee is sought or denied in accordance to the power held by those who recommended him to the job. Knowledge of who integrates the networks behind somebody, may contribute to the exclusion, fear, suspicion, or submission to the individual involved. Relative stability in the position of each group or individual greatly depends on the ability to mobilize external networks to come in their rescue when continuity in EBY is threatened.

Although continuously suspected, the social scientists, mainly the anthropologists, were relatively secure in their jobs and enjoyed considerable influence in policy making. This was because the Banks conditioned financing to the presence of personnel they trusted. One of the two anthropologists originally working at EBY, retired at the

beginning of 1982, the other one stayed without major inconveniences because it was known that his presence guaranteed the regular flow of money. Indeed, he was one of the few -if not the only one- who could write those "neat reports to please the banks" which so much irritated his colleagues. The reasons for the critical remarks such as the above mentioned are obvious: He is the only one capable of communicating in the language of the financing banks.

Changes in the political alliances at a national and local level impinge upon the distribution of power with which particular individuals and positions within Yacyretá are embedded. Those interested either in maintaining or acquiring power, are permanently trying to get external sponsors and to be close to those who, within EBY, already have the right networks. Whoever fails to renew the networks when circumstances change, may fall in disgrace and eventually, lose the job. In Yacyretá, there had been notorious cases of this kind. One, was a lawyer, who, during the military government, had the "right" contacts both in Buenos Aires and in the local government of Posadas. He even came to hold simultaneous positions in EBY and in Misiones government. Even though this situation was outrageously irregular, he was able to maintain it because people feared his connections (which included the security services). While he managed to keep his strategic alliances, he could take advantage of the position at his will: from getting rid

of people he disliked, to impose policies or to enjoy monetary benefits. As long as this situation endured, the rest of the staff could do very little to oppose to him, specially considering he had the ability to mobilize members from the armed forces. He reached a point, however, where he was no longer capable of holding his position because his patrons at EBY and in Misiones ceased to back him under the peril of losing their own supporting connections. Something similar happened to a surveyor who once enjoyed a lot of power in the institution. Rumors say the basis of such power was his relation to the secret services as an informant. After getting in trouble with EBY, he initiated a suit against it and his conflict with the Relocation Agency was commented in the local papers and magazines. This same person is now the head of COPROYA.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MEDIATORS

More than ten years have passed since the construction of Yacyretá and the need of population displacement was first announced in the affected neighborhoods of Posadas. Reactions of the population had varied according to a multiplicity of motives which greatly changed with time. These factors included the national and local political situation, the advancement of the engineering works, the certainty about the completion of the dam and the attitude towards relocation. As long as none of these factors have ever remained the same, the inhabitants of the areas to be flooded were compelled to change their strategies to cope with new situations. Many of the population to be displaced have realized, for example, that personalities who had previously been of invaluable help in reaching the authorities within EBY or the local political system with the purpose of making known their problems regarding relocation, have proved ineffective once a new provincial government was installed. Choice of mediators has thus been influenced by the recognition that in specific conjunctures, certain positions (and the people holding them) may be useful in the negotiation process with Yacyretá.

During the military regime, there were few alternatives to deal with problems created by compulsory relocation. There were also few people and organizations that could act on behalf of the displaced population without risking their own personal security as well as that of the population. Church representatives furnished this limited group of people, since church institutions were favored with some freedom of action. Thus, priests became spokesmen for the concerns of the uprooted neighbors. Such was the case of the father of San Cayetano Church, Vladimiro Lichowski.

With the advent of renewed democratic politics, instances of negotiation multiplied and so did the prospective mediators. Neighbors had an array of choices which included a range of political personalities, political brokers living in the affected areas, human right groups, grass root organizations, labor unions, and provincial and municipal institutions. While representatives of some of these visited the neighbors to offer their good auspices, others were sought out actively by community members. Specific persons and organizations were particularly favored and trusted; nonetheless, no possible mediator is ever totally rejected. As long as they can, the relocated make use of all the available mediators to whom they have access.

In this chapter, I will analyze how various mediators are positioned by the other participants in the communicative practices of the relocation process. The

existence of these mediators has been hinted at or pointed to in previous chapters. They had appeared among those "others" against whom the population, Yacyretá as an entity, and EBY's staff members acquired their own identities. I will now bring them into the foreground and show the obverse side of the coin: how Church representatives, politicians, provincial and municipal functionaries and their departmental domains, as well as neighborhood grass root organizations became involved and came to participate in the long process of resettlement.

1- Church Representatives

In previous chapters, I have described the role played by the Church of San Cayetano in the neighborhood where it was built, as well as in the adjacent ones of Heller and El Chaquito. As already discussed, the Church influenced community events and everyday routines in matters as public as soccer games and festivals and as private as marital unions and family size and composition.

The majority of my informants agreed that Father Vladimiro was the driving force when they organized the celebration of special holidays and also, when they decided to build the Chapel, the pride of all the community. He was regarded as an organizer; most neighbors followed him. However, a few of the neighbors we interviewed praised the efforts of the community "to build a Church which was the

envy of those in the center," but minimized the role played by the priests for whom they expressed little sympathy.

Even though all of neighbors did not think of Vladimiro in the same manner, he himself considered that he was entitled to represent them. When in 1980, Yacyretá announced that seventeen families had to be transferred to another sector because it was necessary to clear a site to construct the workshop for the bridge Posadas-Encarnación, he led the protest against this measure. He went to see the Governor of Misiones in the company of a group of neighbors. According to the local papers, the Father headed the delegation (See El Territorio January 31, 1980, and El Libertador January 31, 1980. On that occasion, he declared to the journalists:

With regards to this (he refers to EBY's announcement), there had been uneasiness in the neighborhood, which is also mine, as long as I am in charge of them in ecclesiastical matters. I took these families claim as if it were mine. I think we are abandoned (El Territorio January 31, 1980).

Father Vladimiro both distinguished himself from the neighbors by saying "these families" and "these neighbors," and simultaneously identified himself with them by using "we" and by saying the neighborhood was his. At the same time, the residents spoke of him as "our Father," thus recognizing him as an integral part of the community, and yet different from the rest. They expected from him what they expect from a father, protection and help in critical moments. By this double process of distancing and

identification he could then become the mediator for the population. He continued to play this role as long as the neighbors acknowledged him as a valid interlocutor with authorities.

When the Church building was endangered, the Father was a mediator and, obviously, at the same time an interested party. As mediator, he was the spokesman of the residents who had built their own chapel at great sacrifice; as an interested party he was defending the basis of his power within the community. He tried all the alternatives at his disposal to attract the attention of authorities, from holding mass to processions. As shown in previous chapters, he failed in all his attempts. As a result, not only did he lose the Church building, but he also lost the trust of the residents. The neighbors have never made claims through the priests since then, although mass was not suspended with the demolition of the Chapel and priests continued visiting the area to celebrate the ceremony in private homes. Everybody agrees that nothing is like it used to be: "We are all dispersed. We were left alone. Then, all people started to change. We could not do anything else. A lot of people left the Church. Priests come only on Sundays, but they are always different ones."

The priest was one of the few who could mediate on behalf of the community when all meetings were prohibited under the state of siege declared during the years of El

Proceso. Nonetheless, his failure in representing the community did not leave it unprotected. Very soon, the demise of the military regime would open up new alternative channels to make demands.

Besides the priest, Sister Mariana was another religious figure who, on occasions, would act as a mediator. Doña María admires her: "The Hermanita (little sister) struggles so much. She helps the poor, to those who need her the most." The nun makes sure that there is always a priest to hold mass: "I don't know where she brings them from, it must be one that is not busy, because there are so many." She is said to be the one who found the solution to a bitter dispute between the neighbors from San Cayetano who were first resettled in the new Yacyretá houses and those who stayed behind. The conflict erupted because those moving wanted to carry the image of San Cayetano with them. The ones who stayed greatly resented their ex-neighbors intentions: not content with leaving them alone to go to the so much desired new homes, they also wanted to take the symbol of the neighborhood. It was like taking a part of their selves. To put an end to the competition for the possession of the saint, Sister Mariana managed to obtain a new image. There are now two San Cayetanos: One Grande and one Chico (a big and a small image), the biggest is in the new neighborhood, and the smallest is kept in the homes of the residents of the old quarter; harmony is back among the

old neighbors. They visit each other and when floods occur, they give shelter in the new settlement to the ones still living in the affected areas.

2- The Province and the Municipality

The population thinks of the provincial and municipal organizations in the same manner as they do of Yacyretá. To them, "the Province" and "the Municipality" are also entities, but they lack the overwhelming power of EBY. Nevertheless, quite often, they are approached for help to find solutions to problems created by the relocation process.

Most of the professionals I interviewed at EBY did not see any significant changes after the restoration of democracy in Argentina with regard to communication in the relocation process. However, communication strategies varied and diversified. While residents barely visited governmental offices during the military years, they increasingly did so with the advent of democracy. This is in part related to the particular stages of the project and the difficulties each of them generated, but it is also due to the way residents of the lowlands of Posadas think of the military and of politicians.

From 1979, the year of the Census, until 1982, contacts with government representatives had been rare. After the intense activity of EBY's staff during the first two years,

everything slowed down because of personnel reductions and uncertainty about the future of the project. Neighbors went on their own to EBY to ask what was happening, but they had not organized collectively to protest against the delays. Nobody saw the military as potential allies in the negotiations with Yacyretá. In general, members of the armed forces never figure in the people's narratives; on the rare occasions when they are, they are depicted as repressive and as the persons to blame for the successive postponements of the initiation of the engineering works.

In fact, it seems that neighbors were right in not trusting those in government, as many of them were said to be involved in corrupt dealings with condemnation settlements in collusion with some EBY's functionaries.¹ Moreover, the inhabitants of the affected areas very well knew that to the military, the poor were only a nuisance. Indeed, papers and TV news continuously showed how the national government was committed to the "eradication" of slums. The message was always the same: society had to

¹ A newspaper article comments sarcastically that it is strange that members of the Tribunal Nacional de Tasaciones (national tribunal of valuation) are simultaneously holding jobs at EBY. Both positions, the paper says, are full-time. With this, corrupt behavior is implied, as there is incompatibility of functions (See Convicción, June 10, 1980). It is also suggested that this corruption is apparent in the sums paid for Heller and for the meat processing plant: 27 million and 4.5 million US dollars, respectively (See El Territorio, February 27, May 7, June 15, October 18, October 21, December 12, 1980).

"extirpate this malaise through surgical treatment."² In Posadas, most of the local bureaucrats appointed by the military shared this view of the poor and did not think they deserved new homes. On the occasions when they met with EBY's staff members under pretext of reaching agreements on behalf of the province and the Misioneros, what they were really expecting was that EBY would take care of most of the Posadas squatters. At least, this is how the members of EBY's staff see it. Provincial and Municipal authorities and their technical personnel had always claimed to be concerned with the problem of intruders, both the ones living in affected areas with no relocation rights and also other individuals occupying fiscal land. Yacyretá claims that it has given the municipality a large sum of dollars to find a solution for that sector of the population and that they have not done anything. The sole exception to this is a neighborhood with uninhabitable dwellings constructed through self help. Even today, the municipality of Posadas cannot satisfactorily explain what has happened with the money. In sum, local representatives were more interested in

² Hermitte and Boivin (1985) discuss the policies of forced population displacement-eradication- during the years of El Proceso in the city Buenos Aires. Eradication is distinguished from relocation because the former does not include any provisions to place the people in new settlements. In Posadas, authorities and the press employed the same terminology. An article in El Territorio announces: The Province has received an important subsidy. It will be used for eradication of viviendas de emergencia (emergency houses, the euphemistic way to refer to the houses of the poor) in Posadas and Oberá (June 6, 1980).

obtaining personal and monetary advantages for one particular sector of the regional society, rather than defending the interests of the dispossessed. They were not willing to act as advocates on behalf of the men and women against whom they were very biased. On the contrary, more than once they pursued policies that damaged the individual freedoms of the poor. Social specialists from EBY remember, for example, how provincial functionaries insisted that prostitutes and single mothers should not be given new houses.

Descriptions of modern states generally see the functioning of bureaucracies as independent from the political actions of the Executive and Parliamentary branches of the state. In contemporary "democratic" Misiones province in particular, as well as in Argentina in general, it is hard, if not impossible, to draw a line between bureaucratic and political actions, even if only for analytical purposes. The neighbors from the areas to be flooded themselves see no difference between state bureaucrats and politicians. To them, they are all "políticos." This phrasing expresses their disbelief and resentment. They are aware of the manipulation exerted by politicians. They say that before elections they are visited by leaders from all parties: "They tell us -'There will be no problem, you will have a house-'...They are promises for elections which they never keep. Elections passed. We are

still waiting." Domingo a member of the neighborhood commission of El Chaquito commented that they had invited the Governor to see with his own eyes the terrible conditions they were living in and to ask him to do something on their behalf. Then, he added: "We are still waiting."

The case of Alberto -"Polo"- Gutiérrez is very illustrative of the mistrust and confusion created by the multiple roles of certain individuals identified with the encompassing category of politicians. "Polo", as most of the Posadeños call him, had become a councilor to EBY's Administrative Council in Buenos Aires through the offices of the Radical Governor of Misiones. Nearly everybody speaks of him as the province representative to Yacyretá. The local newspaper, incidentally owned by Alberto Gutiérrez, refers to him as the Misiones councilor to EBY (See El Territorio October 4, 1988). But at EBY, staff members explained to me that there is no such thing as a provincial representative, he is simply a member of the Administrative Council. By the time we were doing fieldwork (1987), he was also the Radical candidate for City Mayor. Obviously, when visiting the affected areas he was playing with the ambiguity of his position. Obviously too, he was also caught in the contradiction of being simultaneously a member of the contesting parties: the Radical party (as a candidate for mayor), the Province (as presumed representative to EBY),

and EBY (as councilor). Instead of giving him more power, his varied roles hinder his possibility of interceding on people's behalf. While one social worker acknowledges him as a mediator by identifying him as the province's councilor, as a kind of ombudsman, another social worker denies him such a public identity. Rosa told me the case of two women who came to EBY expecting to get preferential treatment because they were recommended by Polo. She pretended not to know him by saying "Polo, who is him?" The women felt offended and left, slamming the door behind them. Lucía had a different attitude in this matter. When doing field work, she found many cases of people with letters of recommendation written by politicians who had told neighbors they could intercede. Lucía reported me: "I had to explain to them that these personages had no power to do anything on their behalf, and tell them: -'Your Councilor is Polo'"

The ambiguities and false expectations created by the politicians upset the EBY's social workers who are in close contact with the population. They complained to me that when these political figures offer their mediation they may unwittingly cause a lot of harm, because they give wrong advice and raise expectations that are impossible to fulfill. In El Chaquito, Heller, San Cayetano, and in the new Yacyretá neighborhood, some of the areas where the social workers had been more active, I could easily identify their influence in the way neighbors spoke of the

politicians. In some cases, neighbors were explicit about the source of their opinions:

Dorotea: The politicians who came here, like the Governor and Polo would tell us that we would move soon. But the Licenciada told us that those were things that politicians say. They, Yacyretá, will tell us when to leave.

The one thing that all Yacyretá staff members agree on: their disdain and annoyance with politicians and government officials. García complained that a lot of the local political leaders go to the neighborhoods and distort information because they themselves are badly informed and do not make a great effort to obtain the correct data. Rosa remembers that during the electoral campaign, government officials would pressure EBY's employees and decision makers to move some specific areas first. On one occasion they succeeded in their request. But at another time, the social workers accompanied authorities while touring the affected areas to demonstrate conditions were much worse in other sectors not favored by the government's mediation. Rosa is convinced that through doing this, they managed to make authorities change their minds. Nearly every professional I interviewed at Yacyretá had an anecdote about the inefficiency and ignorance of politicians. They have the same negative opinion about the more technical offices set by the local municipality and by the provincial government to deal specifically with problems related to Yacyretá.

Supposedly, the municipality of Posadas has always had

a commission, the COMUYA (Municipal Commission for Yacyretá), created with the purpose of negotiating issues related to the dam. When I started my field work, I went to the information desk of the municipality to locate this commission. Nobody was aware it existed. After consulting various employees, they finally sent me to another building where there were other municipal offices. Again, no one in this second building knew about the commission with the exception of an employee who said that there was an architect who sometimes went to meetings involving Yacyretá. I tried to see this person several times but his office was generally closed. Evidently, very few neighbors would attempt to get the help of the local city government if it is nearly impossible to identify who is in charge of EBY's matters.

Although COPROYA, the provincial commission on Yacyretá had existed for nearly ten years, it was not until the restoration of democracy that it began to take a more active role with regards to relocation problems. The Vice-governor of Misiones became the new head of COPROYA after it was reorganized during the Radical administration. At one time the staff included one social worker, three architects and a lawyer. The staff composition reflects a common pattern in the recruitment of professionals in the province: they circulate through posts in the national agencies, local administration, and the national university. A social worker

and the recently appointed executive director of COPROYA had previously worked at EBY. An architect, who was a COPROYA technician is currently employed by EBY. This phenomenon may have an effect on the way the commission operates.

Since EBY's salaries are significantly higher than those offered by the province, some COPROYA staff members may try to be on good terms with the relocation agency, in the hope of getting a contract at EBY. Instead of confronting EBY and trying to find solutions for the relocation problems, they let EBY indicate what they should do. In other words, they are coopted. What is sometimes taken as inefficiency and irrationality in a bureaucrat's behavior may be so in regards to the aims of the organization, but not with respect to the individual's objectives. A state functionary may be more interested in getting a job in the private sector than in controlling its business in the name of his current employer.

On the other hand, former EBY employees may be resentful and biased against the relocation agency in a way that keeps them from seeing the best solutions, and from negotiating on behalf of the province and the population. This is what is now occurring in the case of Horacio Paz, COPROYA's executive director. When he speaks of EBY's staff members he disparages them professionally and morally. A few of his remarks made me feel uncomfortable. These allegations were the same made by the secret services about EBY's staff.

He also appropriated the discourse of human rights activists, which -coming from him- sounded frighteningly out of place. I could not help taking his statements as a personal threat: "Yacyretá is a violation of human rights, it violated their rights with its arrogance." He insisted on this throughout the interview in a way that sounded more like a warning than a commentary on EBY itself. He then asked me who I was writing this for and when I told him it was for a dissertation to be presented in the USA, he said: "It is important that you do this, because Americans really appreciate the truth!"

Conversely, EBY's staff thought of Paz as negatively as he did of them. Before I interviewed him, some of my acquaintances at EBY told me that when he worked there he was very authoritarian, that he was a misogynist, a cursillista³ and a friend of the military. Obviously, given this mutual dislike it is unimaginable to expect a dialogue with the purpose of reaching an understanding between the head of COPROYA and Yacyretá employees. And this is exactly what was happening while I was doing field work. According to EBY's staff, communications with the provincial

³ Cursillistas are Catholics who participate in "courses of christianity." To call somebody a cursillista also implies identifying that person as politically oriented to the extreme right wing. With regards to Paz, some informants also said he was "de colores" (of colors), an extreme rightist Church group which functions as a sect. This group, together with the Opus Dei enjoyed great ascendancy over the military government.

government have broken off.

Paz is in close contact with delegates of some of the neighborhood commissions. I realized this through comparing the texts I obtained when I interviewed each of them. What he says is strikingly similar to what one of the members of a neighborhood commission told me. The resemblances reveal the exchange of information and the sharing of bias. The two were very critical of the social sector and employed exactly the same adjectives to characterize those they despised, namely the social workers García (the supervisor) and Mabel (who used to live in El Chaquito). The two social workers were accused of dividing the neighbors and of favoring some in particular. Both Paz and the delegate Domingo spoke of the affected population in terms which, as I have already mentioned, reveal their biases: "these people," "they are better off in a hut," "they need to be educated to use the new houses." The two men also employed the same expression that established an analogy between the functioning of the Jesuit Empire and that of the EBY. A document of the Justicialista party (official name of the Peronist party) made public shortly before provincial elections for governor, conveys the same opinion of EBY:

Until now, this Entity has been for the Misioneros like a state within a state, a separate republic, the reign of the consultants, where any mediocre foreign or native functionary has planned and decided with a greater power than any of the sectors of the government which razed Misiones during these seven years of this "process of national destruction" (El Territorio, October 15,

1987).

This document was written before Paz became head of COPROYA but after he left EBY. Another part of the newspaper article reveals that he participated in the writing of the declaration:

We wish to state to the conductores (administrators) of that entity, some questions about issues that go beyond the high walls of that bastion of La Rioja street (EBY's address), despite prohibitions of access imposed on some former functionary who is concerned for the abandonment and submission of the local administration, mainly in the area of relocation (El Territorio October 15, 1987).

Paz argues that EBY infringes the original guidelines for relocation which establish "functional replacement in accordance with inventory".⁴ He interprets that this means that EBY must return to the population a house which is the exact equivalent to the one they had before. Thus, according to him, a hut should be replaced with another one. He maintains that by constructing houses of a much better quality than the ranchos of "those people", EBY is not keeping the promises stated in the guidelines and is forcing the relocated population to pay monthly installments they cannot afford. He suggests the affected population should ask the houses in *comodatum*. EBY's staff is against this because such a legal formula leaves the population in a

⁴ In Spanish: Reposición funcional a nivel de inventario. It means that all the infrastructure affected by the hydroelectric project should be replaced with new infrastructure which fulfills the same function.

vulnerable situation because it only gives the usufruct of the property. The technical staff of COPROYA shares this same opinion.

Professionals at COPROYA complain about the same things as their counterparts at EBY: "Politicians are a burden. They do not understand anything and give the wrong advice with only the purpose of gaining political support."

Victoria López told me that she disagreed with the provincial authorities because they suggested to the people already resettled that they not pay for the installments on the new homes. She recommended to neighbors in the new Yacyretá quarter that they continue paying until a law that changes the conditions is passed. Victoria complains that the functionaries are immoral, they only want to get votes:

They promise that they will get a comodatum for a hundred years. They think everything is easy. But there is no legal instrument. Because I respect the people, I cannot create false expectations. Then, just because I confront them (authorities at COPROYA), they tell me I am a Radical (member of the Radical party).

I do not know whether Victoria managed to continue in her job thinking so differently than her boss. Victoria is very aware of the gap between professional expertise and politicians, and is also very critical of the role played by the provincial government. She believes that the province cannot do much with regards to EBY because the local government lacks a clear project for regional development. As they cannot define their own alternatives, they make

demands and questions which are out of place. When authorities from EBY ask local authorities to tell them what they want and need, they do not know what to answer. She feels that COPROYA's professionals are better informed by reading the papers than by talking to their bosses and complains that there is no dialogue between the politicians in charge of decision making and the technicians. She is convinced that the provincial government would be in a better position to negotiate with EBY if authorities consulted with the technicians.

In contrast to what is generally believed by followers of the Weberian model of bureaucracy, in Misiones (as in the rest of Argentina) no position is wholly stable. Indeed, nearly all the bureaucratic positions that do have some decision making power, are both vulnerable and insecure. They are reserved to those loyal to the ruling political party. The ruling party cannot "risk" placing anyone from the opposition or a neutral individual in an office charged with interacting directly with common citizens, especially if this interaction is related to social welfare services. Every government office is seen as a strategic resource to be used with political purposes. Each unit of government is marked by a permanent tension between "technical" considerations and "political" interests as the case above illustrates.

COPROYA changed its organization, goals, location, and

even communication styles following changes in the executive branch of the provincial government. With the Radical administration it moved its offices various times and when I first interviewed the staff, they were sharing the building with other departments. Employees did not see their boss, the vice-governor, very often but, instead, they enjoyed a great freedom of action. The technicians could design their working strategies in the neighborhoods and coordinate lines of action with other areas of government. However, they lacked resources and had limited access to higher levels of decision making.

After Peronism won the local elections in 1987, they modified the Decree 1369 from 1984 through which COPROYA was officially created. They passed a new decree (463) which provided COPROYA with a hierarchical structure. It is currently composed of the provincial ministers, the mayor of Posadas, and by the newly created post of Executive Director. The vice-governor continues presiding over the commission (See Boletín Oficial 7294, May 4, 1988). The executive director has his office next to that of the vice-governor and shares the secretaries with him. He receives the neighbors who want to make claims. He told his staff that he is also the only person in COPROYA authorized to give information to outsiders, unless he gives a special permission to do otherwise. This rupture with a more fluid and egalitarian access between the population and COPROYA's

staff is legitimized by arguing that the new government has granted this office with the "hierarchy" it deserves.

Domingo proudly told me about the new powers the government had finally conferred to COPROYA. Similarly, but indicating the ambiguity with which he, as one of the COPROYA staff members, thinks of it:

Before the executive director was appointed, our direct boss was the vice-governor. We had the power to make public statements. Ever since they appointed a new executive director and reorganized the office by giving it more powers, all the public statements are now made by Paz. COPROYA was given the place it deserved.

The technicians are not very far away from their boss, just one block from the House of Government, where their offices are located on an upper floor of an apartment building. On the street level, there is no visible indication of its location. I visited this office on various occasions. The room was very spacious and as there was very little furniture, only three desks, it looked even larger and barren. I have never seen any neighbor in this office. They do not seem to go there very regularly.

COPROYA's staff sometimes goes to the neighborhoods to offer help. They are particularly interested in those beneficiaries without *capacidad de pago* (credit-worthiness), terms which are interpreted in a different manner than at EBY. At COPROYA, they allude to the individuals who cannot afford to pay for a lawyer, taxes or installments. To COPROYA it does not matter whether these are property owners

or not. To EBY's staff the term refers to a very specific category of beneficiaries: those who do not own the property where they live and whose income is so low that they will not be able to pay for the monthly installments. In general, COPROYA does not take individual cases because it lacks the resources to do so. COPROYA's lawyers and social workers try to solve collective problems, like those shared by most of the neighbors in EL Chaquito, who lack title deeds for the plots they thought they had acquired through paying monthly installments for years. Negotiations for these issues are very difficult and costly and residents do not have either the knowledge to deal with the complex bureaucratic paper work, nor the money to pay for seals, photocopies, certifications and legal advice.

Silvia Juárez, the lawyer, told me of numerous dramatic cases for which she could do little. When there are legal problems, Yacyretá attorneys tell the beneficiaries to come back with a lawyer. As they are unable to hire one, they ask province authorities for advice and end up in COPROYA. The only thing she can do is to tell them how to do the paper work and give them directions on where to go to get all the documentation needed. But there are problems which are beyond her possibilities.

COPROYA's professionals say that residents complain to them that they do not understand what EBY tells them. Members of the provincial commission wonder why they are

understood while people at EBY are not. Luisa, an architect, thought: "Maybe, they need an external affirmation." Irene, another architect, added:

It is possible they do not understand because of the image they have of EBY. They are afraid of it and that (fear) inhibits communication. When people from Yacyretá go (to the neighborhoods), they all say that everything is all right. Afterwards, problems start. They do not tell anything to the entity. Probably, it is because there is a paternalistic relationship.

As already mentioned, COPROYA is basically set to mediate on behalf of the province and its inhabitants, but its membership interprets the goals very differently depending on the positions occupied within the agency. Those holding higher positions in the hierarchical structure and with greater decision-making power are more likely to respond or to define such goals politically. Conversely, those in lower positions tend to defend a "technical and neutral approach". Yet in such a highly politicized environment, it is hard, if not impossible, to claim neutrality. Even if the professional tries to keep herself/himself apart from partisan politics, his/her suggested lines of actions will receive a political reading. Despite partisan pressures stemming from the higher levels of government, professionals insist on maintaining the independence of technical knowledge. In part, this constitutes a strategy to survive in such a context. The technical staff claims that they fill a dual role as translators at COPROYA. They must explain to the population

what Yacyretá had already communicated to them, and they have to convince decision makers of the advantages of various policies and programs.

3- Political parties

The population to be relocated and the Misioneros in general regard government actions, including those from the state bureaucratic sector, as an expression of the ruling political party. Indeed, as the previous section shows, the influence of the party in power may be felt in every sector of the local administration. However, when people refer to politicians, they do not only think of those in government, they also have members of the political parties in mind. Although not in very high esteem, political parties are seen as a necessary evil. EBY's beneficiaries count on them, as a source of counselling, mediation and special benefits. Benefits include things as diverse as free mail, telephone calls, bus and airplane tickets, and the use of political party facilities for meetings. These benefits are, undoubtedly, invaluable resources for a population with a meager income and with no direct access to such services. No offer from any party is rejected as long as it contributes to meet some of their needs. Political preferences, however, are basically distributed between the two major parties. And of the two, the majority favor the Peronist because as more than one informant commented "they

worry more about the pobrerío (poor people)."

Shortly before democratic elections all parties became active in the areas to be resettled and made public their position regarding Yacyretá. Nobody opposed the project. On the contrary, they pressed authorities to hurry the negotiations with Paraguay so as to definitely start the engineering works. The return of political parties to public life was allowed during the days of the Malvinas War (1982). It was made possible because the government needed the support of the whole citizenry. Mr. Domenech, currently a Misiones representative to the National Congress, resumed his involvement in Yacyretá's issues as soon as political activity was permitted. He was leading one of the factions in which Peronism was divided at that time. To some, Domenech's group was the most "intellectual." Apart from his political activity, this leader is a member of the Junta of Historical Studies of Misiones, which is composed of Misioneros concerned with finding an identity through studying their past. Imbued with a Misionero ideology he has always represented the interests of Misiones against the "insensitive central power of EBY Buenos Aires" (See El Territorio, November 14, 1982). As most of Misioneros, he thinks that the "center" ignores the local human resources, including the local (but National) University which he considers of the "highest level." He used to say that what happened with Yacyretá "was the result of dependency and of

federalism which is praised but not practiced." With regards to relocation, he maintained that people did not understand many issues because nobody tried to explain anything to them. Domenech believes that development should be humanistically oriented and include the active participation of the population (El Territorio November 14, 1982). Nevertheless, he knows that limitations to this exist which are inherent in the characteristics of the project itself. He told us that EBY's goal, the relocation, is compulsory and consequently, authoritarian. And then added that it cannot be otherwise.

As a politician and as a national representative, Domenech had presented various projects to Congress on the Yacyretá dam. The most controversial is one passed in 1986 which suggests that Yacyretá's headquarters be moved to Posadas, arguing that the city would be suffering the greatest social impact. This proposal outraged the Correntinos who protested by saying that the dam itself would be located in their territory. Probably remembering how Misiones took the city of Posadas from Corrientes by the turn of last century, a Correntino paper said: "In Misiones, political parties, and not only the ruling one, are determined to take from Corrientes what belongs to it" (See El Litoral, September 3, 1986). Although the argument to move the headquarters is made on behalf of the population to be relocated, the move is sought for other reasons. It would

serve as a symbol of the power of Misiones over its previous "Mother province" and it would contribute to assert the local identity, a major concern of the Misioneros.

4- Neighborhood Commissions

Neighborhood commissions are supposedly non-partisan. Their statutes generally state that members should abstain from political proselytizing. Despite their own regulations, most of these commissions furnish arenas of struggle which different political parties and factions compete for control. Occasionally, attempts to control them politically are led by the local government by setting a special office to coordinate the relations between Posadas quarters and the Municipality (the Office of Neighborhood Affairs). Neighbors are aware of the political manipulations of various members of the commission and comment: "They are only active before elections."

Politics is not the only source of conflict within these commissions. A common complaint against these grass root organizations is that they operate "for the benefit of some of the members' pockets." Doña Tomasa, from Bajada Vieja, once told me:

You know how these things are, they fix everything for their own benefit. And they do not take care of the others. Everything is arranged between compadres and comadres as the saying goes.

In every neighborhood where we did field work we heard the same remarks. We found people who said they would never

sacrifice for others because nobody cooperates: "the only thing they do is to accuse us, who work, of being thieves." And we also found those who said that the commissions organize social gatherings and sell food, "but nobody knows where the money goes."

Mistrust, suspicions and political infighting do not contribute to the stability of these organizations. Very few can maintain a large following because of these continual conflicts. However, when problems become very acute, neighbors temporarily forget their disputes and unite to make collective claims. The commissions from El Chaquito and from San Cayetano have been among the most active in articulating their claims. The reason why neighbors sought the mediation of these commissions may in part derive from the fact that they were faced with the disastrous living conditions created by the floods of 1983 and with the construction of the complementary engineering works. But the explanation for a greater involvement of these organizations on behalf of the residents must be sought in the history and in the strong identity of these two communities.

Major problems created or associated with the dam project brought the neighbors together in order to make collective demands. First, in 1982, neighbors from San Cayetano went to the government house and to the local newspaper to explain the situation created with seventeen families who were asked to leave but were only offered

compensation money because EBY had not yet started to build the new homes. On that occasion, as discussed earlier in this chapter, they had to negotiate with the help of their priest, as this was the only safe way to protest during those days. A year later, commissions from all the areas to be relocated demanded immediate resettlement because all the affected areas were suffering one of the greatest floods of the century. Ever since the great flood of 1983, the grass root organizations from San Cayetano and El Chaquito have been writing letters and visiting authorities, politicians and various local organizations to explain their situation and ask for support. To make claims, they adopted the methods they had learnt from the "social" area of EBY and from government sectors. They took a census of the affected families, gave the number of each household folder and also estimated the number of intruders.

Unlike the COPROYA, the neighborhood commission from El Chaquito does have a seal. It also has a hierarchical structure. All their letters are signed at least by their president and their vice-president. Since 1983, they had been sending numerous letters to the authorities. They send copies of each letter addressed to any authority to the rest of the local personalities. The Posadas Mayor, the Bishop, the President of the House of Representatives, and local political parties and unions receive a copy whenever the commission writes to the Governor. Demands include exemption

from taxes in view of the fact that they are no longer getting any public services; resolution of legal problems regarding their title deeds, and immediate relocation both for the EBY's beneficiaries and for the intruders to whom they extend their solidarity, but from whom they distinguish themselves.

Members of the executive council of these commissions think that COPROYA was created because of their mediation and they also say that many neighbors were finally resettled as a result of the organization's struggles. The rest of the neighbors, local authorities and EBY employees do not acknowledge these claims of power.

Many social scientists and politicians romanticize grass root organizations and think that they always represent an expression of popular resistance and class consciousness. Others take them as an index of the successful integration of the community. Their absence is seen as an anomaly, as a sign of anomie or poor consciousness. It has always puzzled me why middle class intellectuals and politicians expect the poor to act collectively whereas they simultaneously defend privacy and individuality for themselves (or at least they do not force their social equals into participatory enterprises). In the Yacyretá relocation process the action of the neighborhood commissions and the participation of the community has not always developed as a spontaneous response. On the contrary,

more than once it has been pursued by social planners rather than neighbors.

The Yacyretá beneficiaries who had already been resettled are not willing to be involved in commissions or to participate in other forms of organization. Most of them say they have no time to go to meetings and that they need those hours to make money to buy basic staples for their household. Although they are still concerned with specific issues such as the monthly installments and the issuance of deeds, the majority of them are very satisfied and happy with their new houses. They see no reason to get organized mainly because every problem they have with regards to the houses or the neighborhood is solved by Yacyretá. However, the social workers insist that they should have a commission and encourage them to have elections to form them. For example, Susana asked Antonia:

Susana: And when you have a problem, where do you go to?

Antonia: There is a commission that they had elected, a commission to speak with the people.

Susana: Who chose it?

Antonia: They had given us some leaflets to choose the commission. They had called us to the plaza to choose the commission and they had explained to us what it was for.

In some cases, the social workers succeeded and a few commissions were formed but most did not last long. Many residents still do not see why they should have them and expect EBY to tell them what to do with them. EBY is caught in its own contradictions. It has set a paternalistic modus

operandi which reinforced the traditional mode of relating to authorities, but it expects people to demonstrate their ability to organize and act autonomously because that is a sign of the success of the social programs. As reality does not operate in the desired way, they try to modify it to make it fit into their ideal model. People end up participating not by choice, but rather by command.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ON PROCESSES OF COMMUNICATION AND MISCOMMUNICATION

In the previous chapters, my focus was on processes of positioning of the various actors who participate in the Yacyretá hydroelectric project. As positioning is an intersubjective process, I have examined various situations in which each participant encounters others and communicates, or attempts to communicate with them. By now, the reader should be able to identify each participant in the communication processes and should also know the various kinds of dialogical sets which are created or recreated once the dam and relocation project is announced. This chapter will further describe communicative practices, by showing how some of them emerged, became transformed and/or were totally abandoned during the many years of the resettlement process. In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss how EBY dealt with communication processes between the agency and the population to be relocated. In the second part, I will examine the case of Doña Azucena and some of her neighbors to illustrate communicative practices at work.

Deliberate Attempts to Deal with Communication: The

Boomerang Effects of Actions

From the beginning of the relocation program, the anthropologists had been aware that the population from the affected areas felt intimidated with EBY's headquarters and that this constrained their ability to express their doubts and concerns. To overcome such problems, the anthropologists recommended the creation of OIR, the Office of Information and Claims. They had played with the meaning of the initials which in Spanish are the equivalent of the verb to listen. The original idea was to create an office totally separate from the PRAS which would operate in the same neighborhoods. Its main purpose was to listen to people's opinions and doubts and to check the effectiveness of the social programs with the aim of improving communication with the affected population.

Plans for the OIR structure were drawn up and sent to Buenos Aires. Once there, EBY's authorities and the consulting firm interpreted its goals very differently. When the project returned to Posadas, it had been totally transformed. The "I" in OIR, which originally stood for information, in the sense of listening with the purpose of encouraging feedback, was changed into an "I" which stood for "intelligence." Indeed, EBY's social staff members recall that the consulting firm defined the OIR as an instrument of intelligence. Thus, instead of being a means to improve communication by knowing where and how it was

failing, it was to become a means of controlling both EBY's staff and the affected population by handling secret information about them. The head of Public Relations, notoriously related to the secret services was assigned to supervise this task.

Eventually, EBY's authorities had decided to appoint two people to the OIR in Posadas, a sociologist and an anthropology student. The office operated in the same building as the PRAS, but was independent from it. The OIR had to follow instructions coming from Buenos Aires. A former EBY employee remembers that some of the ideas developed in the capital city were impossible to put into practice because they would not work well with the marginal population of Posadas. One of the failed attempts was the installation of boxes in the neighborhoods where people could leave anonymous letters stating their problems and critiques. This project did not prosper: EBY ended up receiving some insulting critiques and obscenities, and the boxes were promptly removed.

The OIR kept records of the questions and problems most commonly raised. Every month, personnel from this office analyzed the data they obtained when people from the neighborhoods came to EBY to inquire about the project. The analysis of the concerns of the population revealed that the majority of the neighbors were poorly informed and that they misinterpreted what EBY's staff told them. The results of

these monthly reports were submitted to the head of Yacyretá Posadas who never shared them with anybody else at the relocation agency. Although years have passed, and the OIR no longer exists, it is still impossible to examine the records. I could only gain access to one copy which was kindly selected and provided for me by Mr. Pérez. In April 1981, for example, the most commonly asked questions were related to three topics: compensation, regularization of title deeds, and the Law of status quo. The majority of the people coming to EBY for consultation were owners who were not living in the area. These people had the right to claim compensation, but were not included in the relocation program. Very few among those to be resettled -the beneficiaries- contacted EBY during that period.

Mr. Pérez says that the aim of the office was to take an opinion poll with the purpose of "returning information to the population," but neither the OIR nor EBY ever attempted to ensure the claimed feedback. Indeed, EBY authorities made no serious efforts to overcome the communication problems the OIR and other sectors may have identified. In other words, the OIR was finally set up to hear but not to speak.

A different sector at EBY, the PRAS, was entitled to speak. While the OIR was listening - but not telling what was heard-, the social workers were telling - but not always

listening.¹ They never knew what neighbors said to employees at the rival office, nor did they ever try to register and analyze the questions and doubts their client population raised. Besides being involved in delivering "oral information" when they visited the relocation areas or when people came to EBY, the social workers also designed some of the written messages. They did so jointly with a local advertising company. This was part of a communication program which did not last long, only through the first two or three years of the dam project.

This initial campaign included pamphlets, posters, and press releases for the local radio, TV, and newspapers which advertised the various social programs of EBY (such as vaccination, documentation, and labor training) and informed people about the options - compensation or relocation- the affected population could choose. One of the social workers told me that they had stopped issuing the pamphlets because very few people could read.² Contrary to what she thinks, I

¹ Everybody in Yacyretá recalled the separation between the two sectors. The pamphlets distributed among the population also revealed such division of labor: "If you still have doubts and if you wish to ask questions: Go to the Office of Attention to the Public of the Entity, [Rioja 1640]. Or consult the social worker." (EBY 1980). To make things even more confusing, posters and papers did not refer to OIR but rather to "La Oficina de Atención al Público de la Entidad" (Office of Attention to the Public of the Entity).

² As the results of the 1979 Census show, 11% of the total population to be relocated is illiterate. The most critical group, is the age group of 50 year old people or older, which registers 24% of the total as illiterate.

had found various cases where people made direct reference to the pamphlets they had received. They particularly remembered one which contained a map with the possible relocation areas and a division of zones which correspond to the three stages of the project. This pamphlet is still a source of conflict between the affected population and EBY. People say that Yacyretá lied to them because the pamphlet stated the dates of relocation of each stage and none of these deadlines have ever been met.³ In one part of the text it said: "And it will be done; and it will be done well...and meeting the planned deadlines."

After these first messages, everything was silenced. Since 1981, there have been no more deliberate attempts to explain the dam project, the characteristics of relocation, and the rights of the population. Moreover, nobody has tried to register the major doubts and concerns of the people involved. Uncertainty about the initiation of the major works was one of the main reasons why there were very few communication exchanges. As far as EBY's employees were concerned, they would have been happy if they had none. The OIR was closed and the sociologist was one of the first ones to be fired when there were personnel reductions. He is currently working as a congressional adviser to the Peronist

³ See EBY, Bulletin 1, July 1980. These were the promised dates of relocation: Stage 1: Second semester of 1981, Stage 2: By mid-1982, Stage 3: From mid-1984 until mid-1985.

representative from Misiones, Mr. Domenech. His case is one more among many illustrating what I have pointed out before: the circulation of professionals within the national and provincial state and EBY.

In 1983, when it appeared that the dam and the relocation housing might finally become a reality, EBY reinitiated more regular contacts with the population and the press. Throughout all these years, most of the interaction with the population was in the hands of the social workers. The head of EBY Posadas said that PRAS was put in charge of communications with the population because its personnel, mainly the social workers, were the ones in closer contact with the affected population. From then on, social workers registered the most commonly raised questions and reported them monthly to the head of the PRAS. When I started my field work I asked them for those records to analyze the characteristics of the people making demands at EBY's offices. To my surprise, the social workers told me that they had thrown away the folders containing such information because it was "old material." This clearly illustrates that they were not interested in checking which were the major communication problems with the population as they had never attempted to examine the nature of the questions people raised. The anthropologist Guillermo Olivera was the only one who studied such information which is summarized in the reports prepared for the World Bank

(see, for example, Memoria sobre el Programa de Relocalizaciones, 1987). Visits to EBY to consult on topics related to relocation and compensation increased gradually from the moment the government announced the initiation of civil engineering projects: 1308 in 1984, 2981 in 1985, and 3733 in 1986 (Memoria sobre el Programa de Relocalizaciones, 1987).

The personnel of the PRAS, primarily a sociologist and the anthropologist insisted that there should be a specific program in charge of communication with the affected population and with the general public. The sociologist had presented a communications plan which included guidelines to inform about two types of themes: a) those related to general aspects of the project such as the relocation program and engineering works, and b) those related to specific circumstances which require urgent actions. The CECOM (Communications Plan and Liaison with the Community) suggested different actions according to the kind of public EBY wanted to reach. With regard to communications with the beneficiaries it suggested "face to face" relations, and participatory techniques (see EBY 1985). Authorities had never done anything with the plan, arguing that there was no budget to implement it. This contradicts what some people at the World Bank told me informally. They maintain that if the social area demands money for such programs, they might receive it as there is a budget available for such purposes.

What in reality is a political decision appears disguised as an economic constraint.

Most of the Posadas staff ignores why, where, and by whom, many of the initiatives are stopped. However, many of the recommendations advising that information be controlled or the straight forward interdiction against speaking, stem from the legal area. For example, while I was doing field work, a new dramatic situation developed. After surveyors took the definitive measurements of the affected area, they determined that some sectors would not be flooded as had been originally presumed. This means that some residents who had been waiting for more than ten years to be moved are no longer affected by the dam project. Therefore, they are not entitled to compensation money or a new home. Concerned with the humanitarian side of the situation, professionals from the PRAS had written a memo proposing a mechanism to notify the people concerned about these changes. Nothing has been done, however, as the PRAS had received orders to stop these procedures. Although there is no formal explanation for such a decision, as is generally the case, some of the staff think it has been stopped by lawyers. Apparently, they opposed the suggested line of action on the grounds that releasing such information is inopportune and may damage the interests of EBY. Instead of having somebody from EBY explaining the current legal situation with the plots, attorneys advise that neighbors requesting information

should be sent to the provincial office of land registration for details. Until now, this new occurrence has not been the source of any conflict, mainly because very few neighbors are aware of this. It will be very traumatic when they finally come to know of it, but I do not think it will be the cause of any violent response or legal demands. As it affects scattered households, it is very unlikely that the victims of this new measurement would be able to unite to protest. Legally, there is very little they can do, because they had never received any written statement in which EBY made any commitments regarding relocation and/or compensation. In 1983, for example, the local paper echoed the concerns of the affected population stating:

The afectados (affected population) think that nobody speaks to them clearly, nor are they given official documents, proving that the decision communicated to them is the last and definitive one (El Territorio, november 14th, 1983).

The problem of the people who are no longer beneficiaries, the so-called "disaffected" population, according to some employees at EBY, illustrates one of the many situations where the relocation agency deliberately obscures facts and hinders communication. In the rest of this chapter, I will examine the case of Azucena Juárez to show how communication worked throughout the long relocation process.

Azucena Juárez, her ordeals and final rewards

This is not a relocation, but an emergency removal

Azucena Juárez first heard of Yacyretá through the Census and the Swap Operation. She did not quite understand what the meaning of relocation was, but after meeting with Mabel, the social worker, she thought it involved the action of taking people from their original homes to others. To her, it was similar to what authorities sometimes do when floods occur, but instead of being transitory it would be permanent. The idea of having a new house made out of bricks was very appealing, but she did not want to believe in illusions. Throughout the 60 years of her life, she had heard too many promises from the state and politicians: none of them came true.

One year after they had come to take the Census, Mabel stopped by and told her, there would be an important meeting in the Church of San Cayetano. Azucena wondered what could be so urgent. Once she was there, she saw all the familiar faces of the neighbors of so many years. Father Vladimiro and all those people from EBY were also in the room. A man from EBY, told them they had to leave the place in a month. Newspapers from Posadas interviewed the head of the PRAS on this matter and reported the following statements:

It is necessary to clear an area in a short time to build the access to the construction area of the bridge. These needs, the demand of movement [sic], do not derive from the Entity itself, but from the deadlines of the National Highway Department with regards to the construction of the bridge itself. We are not going to start the relocation, because the construction of the houses

has not started yet; that does not exist in our own timetable. So as not to create situations of privilege or annoyance, and to avoid falling into the famous "transitory relocations" which end up creating problems, we have found a solution which we believe is the best for these seventeen affected families. The solution we have found is to transfer them, as close as possible to where they now live. This is not a relocation by Yacyretá and does not affect the possible rights of these persons, who we can say are included in the potential population to be resettled by EBY, with rights to the benefits or to the procedures that would be applied with regard to this. In other words, what we do, is to help them move their houses to places where there is some space available, but these people maintain all their possible rights, they are not affected in any way, with regard to relocation. In other words, I would like this to be very clear, this is not a relocation or an example of how people would be treated as relocated individuals. It is an emergency solution in available plots, and once there, they will stay as if nothing has ever happened.

Guillermo Olivera continued saying that nobody should be naive and expect that situations such as the one mentioned above, would never develop in a process of that complexity. He then repeated something he had said before during the interview: "But this is not a conflict, it is rather a problem of confusion (See El Territorio, February 1, 1980, Cf. also El Libertador, February 1, 1980)."

Azucena was indeed confused with what she heard at the meeting and with what was later published in the local paper. Although she could not afford to buy the paper daily, she and her family found a way of keeping informed without having to pay for the newspaper. Everyday they would go to the railway station to pick up the papers and magazines

passengers had left behind. She examined the interview carefully with the help of one of her granddaughters, Cecilia, who, with great sacrifice, was studying social work at the local university. There were reasons to feel disoriented. She asked herself how it could be that people from EBY were telling them to go and simultaneously kept repeating that it was not "their relocation." She wondered what this movement was to be if it were not a relocation.

"Confusion" and "wrong interpretations" were attributed to the way the news was released in previous newspaper articles, but the reasons for confusion can be easily found in the text transcribed above which reproduces what Guillermo Olivera from EBY said. The anthropologist from EBY presented the problem of the construction of the bridge as something independent from Yacyretá. He was referring to something EBY has always maintained officially: that the dam and the bridge were separate undertakings. He said so in a way in which he presupposed that the listener was aware of such distinctions, and therefore, he did not need to elaborate on this. His statements reflected the ambiguities regarding the two works. He did not explain why Yacyretá would intervene in the "emergency transfer," considering - as he indeed stated- that the Entity had nothing to do with the bridge. He presented EBY as a mediator in this issue, as somebody trying to find solutions for an inconvenience created by others. His statements also reflected his own

uncertainties which he shared with everybody at EBY. In one part of the text, he admitted that Yacyretá had not yet started to build the resettlement homes. Moreover, he was careful not to assert that relocation was an unquestionable and certain fact. Instead, he spoke of "possible" and "potential" resettlement.

Obviously, neighbors felt disoriented and uncertain when they heard this ambiguous discourse. Azucena thought they were hiding information from her, but was sure about one thing: very soon, she and her neighbors would have to leave. Olivera's words did not meet the conditions of credibility, but some words were signs indicating the authority of the speaker and therefore, carried the power of commands.⁴ Thus, Azucena and her neighbors felt that they had to obey even though they did not believe in the reasons people from EBY had given to them. Felipe Cruz, one of the lawyers, thinks that the fact that many of Azucena's neighbors preferred to get compensation money instead of waiting in the area until the relocation homes were completed proves that very few believed that Yacyretá would ever construct the new settlements.

Although Azucena was very skeptical about what they

⁴ I am following here Greimas' (1983:103) concept of the *vraisemblable* (credible) which refers to the conditions under which people take a discourse as true. I have taken from Bourdieu (1982:59) the notion that discourses are not only signs to be deciphered, but that they are also signs denoting authority and wealth.

could do, she did go to the meeting Father Vladimiro organized at the Church of San Cayetano. They had protested against the measure for some days, but in vain. Finally, Azucena decided to ask to be moved temporarily because she still hoped that one day she would get the promised house. After all, EBY had told her that she would get a house in exchange for her own when she reported that she was an owner. She was not going to do as her neighbors, who preferred to have the money. That is what Doña Asunción had asked for, and they gave her so much money that she could buy that nice little house near the Hospital.

Some days later, they had come to Azucena's with a truck and took everything, including the parts of the house, into an area next to the old Heller factory. They had put a metal plate on the door which had a number and said EBY. She felt as if she was marked and also wondered why EBY had said they had no involvement and then had put this sign outside. She was very upset with this. The frequent visits of the social workers also annoyed her: "They always come, but one day they say one thing, and another day, they say another thing." But what annoyed her the most was what happened to her in 1985, the year when she had found out that she was not an owner.

From being an owner to becoming a squatter

Azucena recalled that in 1985, somebody from EBY

stopped by and announced to her that there would be a meeting at the Posadas office of the relocation agency. She was told that she had to take her personal documents, her blue folder and the property's documents with her. They recommended that she bring a lawyer, but she could not afford one. As a washerwoman, she was barely making enough money to feed her family. Luckily, her granddaughter had got a job with the municipality and was contributing some money to the household budget, but it was not enough. She decided to go without an attorney to see what they wanted. She took her folder and the sales contract and headed for the Entity. Once there, she was asked to wait in the street until the other neighbors arrived and EBY's staff was ready to see them. She felt intimidated. After a prolonged wait outside the building where they could feel the burning summer's heat, they were finally allowed inside. One of the guards at the entrance, took them upstairs, to the second floor. There were three men sitting at a large table, all dressed in dark suits. Azucena only knew one of them, Mr Pérez, the engineer, the dirigente (leader) as she called him. One of the other two men was particularly serious. He was tall, blonde and blue eyed and spoke with all those hard words. He had a very strong porteño accent. Azucena was afraid to ask him anything. The man made some comments about the deeds that she did not quite understand. Meanwhile, Mabel, the social worker, came in and sat next to the,

neighbors. Although she was the only friendly face in the room, she was not behaving in the same way she did when she visited their home. Every time Mabel tried to utter something, Mr. Mariano Arroyo Costas, the biggest lawyer, interrupted her. Maybe, Azucena thought, she is also afraid of him. He must be her boss.

Mr. Arroyo Costas wanted to see everything they had brought. Doña Azucena showed him the folder she had kept so carefully throughout all those years even when the flood covered her home. And she had also taken the sales contract from the plastic bag where she had put it after her husband died. The big lawyer had put his glasses on, looked at the papers, but he would not say a word for endless minutes. Then, he asked with a commanding voice: "Where is Mr. López? You say he is dead? Where are the papers proving that? Where is the succession? We cannot proceed with your case unless that is done." He continued looking at the documents and suddenly he asked disdainfully: "What is this paper? It is illegible in some parts...it looks as if you had washed it." Azucena tried to explain: "It was in 1983, with the big floods..." She was interrupted and Mr. Arroyo Costas continued telling her that her sales contract had no legal value. Then, he added: "Unless you get the title deed, you will technically be an intruder." Soon after that he asked the others what they had brought. He told to them that most of their documents were useless. He explained that EBY was a

state institution and therefore, every operation in which it participated had to conform to the National Law of Accounting and to other legal instruments.⁵

Azucena thought she might have misunderstood him. It could not be true. She and her neighbors had been paying taxes for years as if they were owners and now, EBY was telling them that the papers they had did not prove their ownership. "How could it be, she asked herself, if the other neighbors got compensation when the bridge construction started only through presenting the same kind of papers." She told me: "It is unfair, they do one thing with some and a different one with others." She was right. This was confirmed by people at COPROYA and by some of the EBY's staff. When EBY intervened in the urgent displacement of the seventeen families and even later, when they moved some more because of other complementary works, they had paid compensation to residents without the proper deeds. To avoid conflicts at that time and having no homes to offer, EBY opted for a solution which people could not understand because of its complexity. Yacyretá purchased from the population their sales contract, and through this, the right to legally claim the title deeds. It did not really buy the plots themselves. This procedure is not clear to any of the neighbors and until now, they are convinced that EBY's

⁵ For detailed comments on the legal constraints, see for example, El Territorio, August 6th, 1985.

behavior is capricious.

Felipe Cruz who was also there, felt very upset. Something was wrong in EBY's procedures. They should have never given those famous blue folders. The problem with them was that people who only had a sales contract were registered as owners. For years, people like that poor woman, Azucena, had thought that they would get a house without paying. Only when they met with the lawyers, did they realize there might be some problems. Cruz remembers:

For us, somebody with a sales contract was not a proprietor. We had to explain the situation with the title deed. We spoke different codes. They closed themselves, they were biased against us. Because they had always heard another thing about relocation. There were so many problems. Sometimes they would come with papers that were legally "non-existent." Some had bought their place in the wrong way in various senses: 1) From somebody that was not an owner, 2) With a document which was not suitable. They think that just through the act of paying, they become owners. They do not know they have to see a notary and get the title deed. They consider these things with absolute omission of the official sector. They do not take into account that an instrument has to be opposable to third parties. For them, it is only important that it has value among their group.

The legal situation with the deeds was indeed chaotic. It was partly due to the particular history of the province, which was first a part of Corrientes; then, a national territory; and finally, a province. Because of this, land registration was extremely disorganized. But it was also related to the way people understood property. Whereas in Argentine law, a house and the land where it stands are considered a whole, unless otherwise stated, for many of the

neighbors affected by Yacyretá, the houses are movable property which can be taken and installed in various places, preferably in public land. They do know, however, that land may be privately owned and that it can be either purchased or occupied with the permission of the owner. What they do not understand is that all transactions must be legally sanctioned and registered. To most of them, it is enough that the others recognize their claims on ownership of a specific house or plot. They distinguish between those who presumably own the land and those who do not, and they hierarchically position the residents with regards to these criteria. To people like Azucena, who has always looked a little down on the neighbors who were not owners, it was a total shock to hear that according to EBY and the State, she was also propertyless.

After finding out about the problem with her title deed, she felt so angry that she got together with some neighbors and hired a lawyer. She will have to work extra hours to pay for his legal assistance. Besides this, she also had attended meetings organized by people from COPROYA and EBY. EBY had told them that they were trying to find the person who had originally sold them the land. EBY's employees had to trace some of these owners in all parts of the Republic and even in foreign countries. Azucena and her neighbors had bought the land from Mr. Rolón, the grandson of one of the first Posadas residents. But Mr. Rolón had died

years before. EBY had to invite his widow to recognize the sale of the plots. She agreed to do so in some cases, but not in all of them. In the case of Doña Azucena and Don Ruiz, she would not acknowledge the purchase of the land, but instead she admitted their right to make a claim for the structures of their houses. As a result, Doña Azucena and Don Ruiz were from then on considered EBY's beneficiaries with the right to the new houses. They would no longer get them for free but rather would have to pay monthly installments on them. EBY would deduct the value of their current house from the total they were expected to pay.

In 1985, after envoys from Buenos Aires established the final value of the property, Doña Azucena and Don Ruiz were called once again to EBY to sign a final agreement. Juárez, another neighbor, was also invited to go. He was luckier than they because Mrs. Rolón recognized his dealings with her former husband and now EBY considered him an owner.

During the meeting, EBY told them the sum each neighbor would get for his/her home. A few were unhappy with the amount to them. Don Juárez, remembers the meeting bitterly:

Don Juárez: The other time we went to a meeting at EBY and we made many demands...First, there appeared a guy who looked like Jaroslowski (a national representative), and he said, OK gentlemen...

Café: Don't you remember who the man was?

Don Juárez: It was an old fellow, thin, tall and bald. He said "those who are proprietors, who will sign, here are the papers." You may read and you may sign, here. If there is anybody...a problem, that is no longer my problem, because I am doing my own things. I am doing my own work and it is my

duty. Whoever likes the deal, he should sign and we give him the house and "chau"(bye,bye). And if somebody doesn't like it, he may remain here, and if water comes, that will be his business. And then, all of us felt astonished. We were like 20, we were all there. He wanted to make us sign, nearly by force.

Café: Have you attended there together?

Don Juárez: Of course, we went together. That is what killed us. He made all of us keep our mouths shut. Because he convinced us. In other words, they had pressed us.

Café: And when was that?

Don Juárez: Last month. We had been arguing since 4 to 8 P.M., four hours. In the end, he made us sign everything. They all fought because they give little money for your plot. They wanted to give you 9,000 or 10,000 australes (Argentine currency) for the house and the plot to those of us who were owners. But there are two others on the same block (Doña Azucena and Don Ruiz) who were told they were not owners and they were given the same amount. And I do not understand. What are you going to do with that money? You cannot even buy public land. There's nothing you can buy. We all fought against it.

Don Juárez is still unable to distinguish the differences in rights between the owners of plots and houses and those who only get some credit on the improvements. He does not realize that even though the former may get an estimated value which is roughly the same as the one given to non-owners of the plots, their rights are totally different. In their case, they will not pay any money for the new home. Non-owners, however, will have to pay monthly until the cost of the house is covered. I have found that most of the people who are living in the new settlement areas do not know exactly what definition applies. Many residents still do not know whether they are owners, occupants or tenants. In the next and last section, I will examine the reasons why

they are unable to say what their current status is.

On interdictions, contradictions, and myths about the poor

Before moving to the new Yacyreta housing project, Azucena had heard various rumors from her neighbors. She felt very anxious at some of the things they had said to her. Don Juárez said he had heard that once the owners gave EBY the title deed from the old house, they would have to wait for more than three years to get the deed of the new home. Moreover, he was also told that he would probably have to pay installments, even if EBY considered him an owner. Azucena knew that this did not fit her case because by then, she was aware that she would have to pay, but what worried her, was the amount they would charge her. At the beginning, she remembered, they had promised that residents would be charged so little that even a maid who received hourly wages could easily pay. Now, she was hearing that the poorest of those who had already been resettled would be evicted because they could not afford the homes.

Another thing that worried Azucena was what she called the status quo law. Some former neighbors had told her it was forbidden to build fences or to make improvements in the houses. EBY, she explained to me, would only allow changes which meet certain construction requirements. "They want us to do everything with bricks or concrete and there is no way we can afford those materials."

When I asked professionals at EBY about these fears, one of them told me it was part of the myths people make. Then he asked me: "Have you been to the neighborhood?" He meant: "Have you seen all the changes they had made?" He was right, or at least, partly right. The fences were among the first things the new residents had built after the move.

The concern with the construction of fences illustrates some of the misconceptions about the poor, even among social scientists. When the houses were in the planning stages, EBY's staff said that the design should respect their own ways. They thought, for example, that a woman would want to see her neighbors and her children while she was washing clothes in the backyard, and hence they recommended that all houses should communicate with the others. This idea proved to be false. Residents want to have fences to keep some distance from their neighbors (neither to bother them, nor to be bothered). They are very concerned about their privacy, something most of the social scientists do not expect as a behavior among the poor, since they assume a sense of community among them. There is indeed a feeling of closeness and cooperation with neighbors but, simultaneously, there is also a need of separation from the others. They justify this through concepts such as "envy." "There is so much envy, Doña Porota once whispered to me, that if you buy a new pair of shoes, everybody criticizes you. That is why I do not want to see them." Fences are also

related to a peasant way of life which is revealed both in those who migrated from the countryside to Posadas, and among the ones who had lived in the city since they were born. They need fences, they tell me, not to have animals getting into their yards because they may destroy their vegetables and flowers.

The fact that the new residents of the Yacyretá neighborhood had built fences and made improvements does not prove that there are not any prohibitions or restrictions. What it shows, is that even if those rules exist, most of the residents are not afraid of breaking them. In fact, at least until recently, when people were receiving the houses from EBY, they had to sign a contract of comodatum where the comodatario -the person and his/her household with the right of usufruct of the house- agreed:

- 1) to return the unit at the request of EBY as it is established in Article 2285 of the Civil Law.
- 2) to verify that the house is given in good conditions.
- 3) not to introduce any changes and/or to raise any demands for compensation.

EBY does not really enforce the construction requirements and, in general, residents make most of the changes they wish. A lot of the people to be relocated think that the provincial law of status quo which was passed in 1974 and declared unconstitutional in 1983, is still valid. Once people move into the new homes, they interpret the

conditions stated in the contract as part of such law.

The comodatum also confirms another fear expressed by most of the people I interviewed: that owners do not get a title deed for the new homes. I heard EBY was thinking of changing these policies by the time I was finishing fieldwork. However, while we were interviewing proprietors who had been resettled, none of them had a deed and they were feeling very upset about this issue. Yacyretá got caught into its own trap. After years of insisting that nobody is an owner unless the person can present a title deed, and after repeating again and again that people should never accept a transaction unless they are given the corresponding proof of property, they were now expecting that people should feel content with contracts of comodatum. EBY justifies the situation by saying that, in some cases, the definitive houses are not yet ready, or that in others they are waiting to have some legal problems solved. The agency also states that there is very little personnel to deal with the complexity of most cases. But most of the residents have learned their lesson and now want what Yacyretá had so well taught them to demand: a legal instrument proving that Yacyretá had not lied to them. Not until they see the deeds, would any of the neighbors stop mistrusting the Entity.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION. WHEN FLOODS AND DEEDS SPEAK BETTER
THAN WORDS.

This chapter has two related purposes. First, it discusses my personal relationship to the relocation process and to the people of Posadas through reflecting upon my dual role as an insider and outsider. This reflexive view enhances our awareness of the communication system as a process in which our own mystifications play an important role, an aspect discussed in the second part of this chapter. Thus, in the last section I look at the way we misconstrue processes of change, and then concentrate on the analysis of our possible contributions we can make as anthropologists.

The anthropologist looking at anthropologists and other
social scientists in her own society

Thus far I have excluded my personal link to what I have been describing. What I will do is by no means the kind of exercise in "self contemplation" and "self-reflection" so dear to many contemporary writers in the human and social sciences, who take what should be a necessary first step in

any analytic process as an end in itself. My aim here is to enable the reader to understand from which vantage point I have written this text. As Bourdieu has put it well:

The objectification is always bound to remain partial, and therefore, false, so long as it fails to include the point of view from which it speaks and so fails to construct the game as a whole. Only at the level of the field of positions is it possible to grasp both the generic interests associated with the fact of taking part in the game and the specific interests attached to the different positions, and, through this, the form and content of the self-positionings through which these interests are expressed (1984:12).

Hence, my particular positioning within this story influenced my research questions, the answers I obtained and the way my data was interpreted and organized in the text you have been reading. However, I intentionally avoided fully disclosing my relationship to the hydroelectric project earlier because I felt that it would predispose the reader toward a particular evaluation of the situation. Readers could have focused, for example, on specific issues, and their interpretations might have been biased by an identification with the voice of the writer, who generally appears as an authoritative figure. I preferred, instead, to barely hint at my vantage point in this process and where I later stood when I spoke through my writing. I did not want to provide clues which could have been taken as elements of a code of rules of interpretation because I agree with Giddens that to do so is a form of social control (1984:89). I know, however, that no matter how careful one is, our

imprint is always present, even more so, when one is not a passive observer of the story one writes about.

After I reveal my various identities which were formed before and during the project, readers will be able to draw their own conclusions about how my personal link to the reality studied impinged upon the selection, interpretation, and account of the relocation processes. I am an Argentine citizen, a Porteña (born in Buenos Aires) and therefore, a "parachutist" (see Chapter two) who "landed" in Misiones in 1980 to work as a professor of anthropology at the National University of Misiones. Both while living in Misiones and after I came to the USA in the fall of 1984 to take my graduate courses at the City University of New York, I changed homes constantly, and in various ways my situation resembled that of the displaced. When I went back to Posadas in late 1986 to start my field work, I had a hard time finding a house and I ended up in a semi-abandoned apartment, lent by some friends, in a housing project 6 kilometers from downtown. On my way from that "dormitory city" to my work at UNaM or to the areas to be flooded, I used to pass by one of the new housing compounds of Yacyretá. Everyday, I had the same thought: "I wish I could have one of those houses for myself."

After a few months of living in very precarious conditions, I finally moved to a house in Bajada Vieja, a few blocks from one of my research sites. Some of my

neighbors and Posadeño friends have told me that my place, which used to be called "the sailor," had been a bordello until the late '60s. From my windows I could observe how daily life goes by. For example, I can see the paseras coming and going to the port, only four blocks away. They carry huge baskets on their heads and stop at every door to offer fruit, vegetables and smuggled goods. Right at the corner, there is a grocery store whose owners know and influence much of what happens in the quarter. The paseras stop there to eat, to chat, and to leave their merchandise overnight. Doña Itatí, the grocer, is very active in the neighborhood commission and in the chapel on Bajada Vieja street. She is also very well-connected to the ruling Peronist party. A lot of people who live on the slope stretching down to the river come to her store to buy goods on credit.

Besides living next to one of the areas to be relocated, and therefore being a participant of the reality under study, I have also been connected to EBY in various ways ever since I arrived in Misiones. First, my colleagues and some of my students at the university worked at the relocation agency. Second I did research at EBY's request on the means of subsistence and repayment capacity of the people to be relocated" (UNaM 1982). Third, I live in the city that as a whole is affected by the hydroelectric project. Thus, I had been a participant observer and

occasionally, another actor in the processes here described, long before I formally began field work in 1987.

Even though I am not the first anthropologist to study his/her own society, most of our colleagues working at academic institutions in the core countries still hold a mystified version of the initial anthropological experience that presupposes the confrontation with difference as a necessary step toward becoming a true professional. To many, the ethnographic encounter is characterized by culture shock, a temporary state of confusion and disorientation, a sort of rite of passage that enables us to leave behind years of apprenticeship and transform ourselves into adult scholars. Such expectations are alien to Argentine anthropologists as we never do fieldwork abroad and very rarely do we choose a research site located far away from our homes.

On my return to New York to write my dissertation, I was always startled by the question, "How did you do in the field?" My surprise at such a question made me realize the differences between my colleagues' experiences and mine. My American counterparts had gone to the field to encounter an "Other" so as to discover their own selves and Western culture. In my case, I had never thought of my research in those terms because the "field" was home. Therefore, it never occurred to me that I was coming back from the field, but rather, from my country and my job. Conversely, my stay

in the USA both during my graduate courses and when I wrote this dissertation provided me with the cognitive and behavioral contrast that helped me look at my own -national-reality with new eyes. In various ways, my field of research was the USA. It was in the USA -and not in Argentina- where I constantly contrasted ways of thinking, behaving and speaking and I bored my American friends with our professional disease of comparison: "This is not the way we do it..." "In my country,..." It was also in the USA where I experienced what it is to be different. All of a sudden, I found myself placed in positions nobody had ever granted me before: I became a foreigner and a Latin American, in other words, an "other" whom the majority of citizens regard as an inferior. In the USA, Argentines -as well as all other Latin Americans- are not considered part of the Western world but rather, members of the Third underdeveloped World. This is very confusing in terms of our national identity as Argentines are raised with the idea that we belong to the Western, modern and advanced world. Even my school experience was shocking in this respect, when attending classes, I found that teachers and students were speaking of my own people -and consequently of me- as objects of anthropological inquiry. This discovery was quite disturbing, as never before had I thought I could be a "scientific" object for others. Ever since then, I have been haunted by a number of questions for which I have found no

answer: What defines anthropology as such? Is it -as many anthropologists from the core countries like to believe- a particular discourse Westerners produce to understand themselves through looking at others, who are generally placed in a different time and space? If such is the case, can we speak of doing anthropology when we, "others", are involved in the construction of such discourse? Or, put in other words, can we become subjects of inquiry when we are the objects of the discipline, when the "savages are us," as a Brazilian anthropologist once ironically put it (cf. Kant de Lima 1985)? Although these and similar questions remain unanswered, I think we should re-orient efforts toward finding a more universalistic view of the discipline to replace the Western-centered focus that underlies most of the present anthropological research. Even though this study has not attempted to obtain a response for such problematic questions, my experience regarding the Yacyretá hydroelectric project will provide an interesting empirical case to think reflexively about what defines anthropology.

Unlike most of the anthropological studies, this one has not been made by an outsider. My insider role, however, is an ambiguous one. I am an insider to the extent that I live in the city where I did the study, I am a neighbor of some of my informants, and because I had done previous research for EBY and know many of its employees. Such elements, combined with the fact that I share with my

informants a national identity which was imposed on us through the educational system and the mass media contributes to create a sense of commonality and complicity which sometimes facilitates dialogue. These common bonds are often used rhetorically to mask relevant social distinctions such as class and regional differences which act as constraining factors in communicative practices. But in many respects, I feel an outsider both because many of the Posadeños place me and many of my friends in that position through calling us "parachutists" and also because I myself still maintain many of the distinctive cultural traits of the big capital city Buenos Aires.

In Misiones, where I work, local authorities always urge University professors to do research geared to the solution of local problems. Our worthiness is weighed with regard to the contributions we make to the "well-being of the province." For Argentine anthropologists, research and university positions are not separate undertakings performed in very different locales. External demands are permanently impinging upon our work at the university. Whoever proposes to study a theoretical problem with the sole purpose of advancing scientific knowledge would be accused of "scientism." Moreover, intellectuals would be regarded as reactionaries if they maintained that they should limit themselves to being the "critical consciousness" of the society. The defence of the role of clerks -as the French

author Benda (1955) once proposed,¹ is unthinkable in a context where university professors are expected to put their knowledge to the service of the region.

As part of the local community, very often I was pressed to declare my sympathy or antipathy towards EBY or to produce something the Misioneros would consider "useful." These problems are similar to those experienced by other anthropologists who do fieldwork at home². To be a "native" scholar entails advantages and disadvantages (Cf. Jones 1976). For example, it is hard to obtain certain kinds of information. As I was an anthropologist, most of the staff members of COPROYA and EBY were very vague and cautious when they reported on the role played by anthropologists and sociologists in the Yacyretá relocation program. Some presumed and others knew that I was a friend of these individuals. The same as with everybody else I have been describing, I was positioned by each participant in the project, and such positioning impinged upon my interaction

¹ Benda defines clerks in opposition to laymen, as all those who speak to the world in a transcendental manner. For him, they were the intellectuals who devoted their lives to unworldly causes -to the cultivation of the mind and the spirit, instead of pursuing practical ends and following political passions (cf. Benda 1955:30). This position is similar to the ideal of the disinterested observer praised by many social scientists.

² For a discussion on the issues involved in the study of one's society, see the edited volume compiled by Donald Messerschmidt (1981). Also of interest are the articles in "Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries," edited by Hussein Fahim (1982).

and, therefore, communication with people related to the project. Although I was aware I should avoid biases and a priori evaluations of each participant in the relocation process, I could not totally avoid positioning my interlocutors in accordance with what I had already heard about them before our encounters. Thus, by the time I started my field work, both I and the people to be interviewed held images of each other; in some cases these remained unchanged during my research, and in others, they were transformed through our interaction.

The lawyers, for example, who included me in the broad category that they vaguely identified as "sociales" (literally translated as people concerned with the "social") talked to me "from above." They employed the formal term of address ("usted") and adopted a "doctoral" position -that of the superior, knowing subject and teacher- when they described and explained to me their functions at EBY and the legal aspects of relocation.

The social workers, on the other hand, generally were rather friendly and cooperated with my research. Their attitude was quite different from what I had anticipated. I was expecting either indifference or resistance to the interviews, as in Posadas most of the social workers express animosity toward anthropologists, arguing that our profession is invading their disciplinary territory. At EBY, this competition between the two fields was shown through

opposition to hiring María Crespo, an anthropologist and friend of mine, for the sector in charge of social action programs which was controlled by social workers. They argued that the only professionals with the appropriate skills to perform the roles required in that sector are social workers. According to them, anthropologists should deal only with theoretical issues.

The hardest interviews of all were those with my colleagues, the anthropologists, and with our closest intellectual relatives, the sociologists. While talking to them, I constantly felt that I was the one under scrutiny. I am sure they also shared that feeling. Moreover, the answers were not as spontaneous as they were in the case of other staff members. One of my colleagues, Enrique Insúa, answered everything in an already interpreted and theoretical manner which left little room for my own interpretations. His statements were so abstract, ambiguous and obscure that it was extremely difficult to discern what he was referring to. Another colleague, the anthropologist Guillermo Olivera, asked me whether I could "frame my questions in a more structured manner." I interpreted this remark as a way to make a value judgement of my work and as an attempt to assert the superiority of his knowledge in the social sciences.

The disadvantages, however, are not such when one realizes that they may be taken as valuable data. Indeed,

the way many informants interacted with me -because they regarded me as either an anthropologist, a parachutist, a woman or a junior scholar -enabled me to understand many mechanisms of communication within the relocation project. For example, by reflecting upon those reactions, I could identify who places himself/herself in an authoritative position and who does not, and how each attitude affects communication exchanges.

What happened to me the first time I tried to interview one of the lawyers is a good example of this. In order to analyze the characteristics of initial encounters between EBY's staff and any outsiders (including the "dammed," professionals, and government officials), I myself tried to establish my first contacts with the different professionals and technicians working in each section. Infuriating but predictable was my attempt to talk to the head of the legal section. Before going to the second floor, where the lawyers are, I stopped briefly to greet Guillermo, an anthropologist who is both a colleague at the university and a friend. I told him that I was planning to go to the second floor to see the lawyers, and he wished me good luck. When I asked why he made such a remark, he said that the Secretary of Energy had presented his resignation and that there were rumors that the Director of Yacyretá would become the new Secretary, leaving his present position vacant. He was sure that everybody in the legal sector would be somewhat

agitated, as a change of director could mean a loss of the power enjoyed by their sector. Upon my arrival, a secretary asked me who I was, registered my name and requested the reasons for my visit. I told her that I was a professor at Misiones National University, doing research for my doctoral degree at a foreign university; I also said I had already talked to Engineer Pérez, head of EBY in Posadas, who knew about my study and gave permission to interview the personnel. This presentation would have sufficed and even impressed whomever heard it in other settings. This was not the case here. She asked me if I had an appointment to interview her boss, Dr.Díaz Bedano, and I said I did not but that to request one was precisely the purpose of my visit. She warned me that it was unlikely that he would receive me because, as she put it, "He is very busy, and here the problem is time." Right after that, she left. On her return, she reported in triumph: "You see, I told you, here the problem is time...Dr.Frías will be receiving you instead." I asked her whether I could make an appointment with her boss for another day. She replied in defiance: "I already told you that Dr.Frías is going to see you; Dr.Díaz Bedano would not see you, as I had already told you, here the problem is time." This was my first and only attempt to meet this character. Although very upset at that moment, I felt that I was experiencing to a lesser degree what members of the affected population had to undergo every time they needed to

consult about their problems.

Needless to say, much of my research was facilitated by the fact that I had lived in Posadas for years and that I knew most present and former EBY employees working at PRAS as well as other members of the community related to the hydroelectric project. I often obtained important information on occasions when I was not deliberately attempting to collect any data about the relocation process. For example, through my sometimes unintended participant observation of the chatting at a friend's party or the local gossip (a favorite pastime of Posadeños), I realized that certain statements I initially took for my informants' misconstructions of reality were indeed true. Thus, I came to check my data under the most unexpected circumstances. Most such opportunities for gathering information are generally unavailable to outsiders. Even when they are, it is very likely that a foreign observer would not notice what the talk is about.

Although being an active participant of the reality we study entails countless advantages, it is also a source of conflicts and anxiety. On one hand, we may become, or at least be regarded as, judges of the performance of our peers and friends. Undoubtedly, this potential of our work often generates suspicions and mistrust. On the other hand, our work may raise expectations among the various competing groups involved in the project. Each party may exert

pressures to impose its own version of the facts. When doing research on the Yacyretá dam, I experienced many of these conflicting situations. I finished my field work when I realized that continuing to perform a neutral role would be extremely complicated and that the delicate equilibrium I managed to maintain was endangered.

My retreat to New York to write the dissertation enabled me to analyze my data in a very different way from what I would have done in Argentina: actors and communicative acts acquired a completely different dimension and meaning, and I have found relations and clues that passed unnoticed while doing research. Physical and emotional distancing as well as a permanent dialogue between theory and my data contributed to my view of the communication processes. I believe that even the structure of the dissertation itself would have been quite different if I had stayed in Posadas to write it.

The previous eight chapters have been the product of my reflections at a distance. I wrote them while I was enjoying the luxury of thinking about these matters during the entire day, without experiencing the pressures and fears one sometimes feels when writing at the site of our research. The following pages will summarize what I had attempted to convey through my writing. However, these last pages might also reflect the new conditions under which I am writing them. I am now back in Posadas, watching in despair the

worst economic crisis Argentina has ever experienced, witnessing the sale to multinational investors of the state's remaining wealth, and observing how a great mass of people feels betrayed because its government, the Peronist party that came into power in July 1989, made alliances with its long-standing enemy, the conservative national oligarchy. Moreover, very few citizens accept the President Menem's attempts to justify pardoning the military officials who participated in coup attempts and others who were found responsible of repression and torture during the years of the dictatorship. While writing, I cannot help thinking what the impact of these economic and political developments would be upon the affected population of Yacyretá and obviously, upon all Argentines, including myself.

Undoubtedly, these recent events affect the way I now view problems of communication in the Yacyretá project. This is not surely the first time that economic and political developments have conditioned and shaped the way I -and we, social scientists- interpret a given reality.

Communication and the mystifications of intellectuals

When I wrote the first drafts of my research proposal, I suggested that communicative practices in the Yacyretá project might have changed with the advent of a democratic government. My underlying assumptions were that social

relations are generally asymmetric and that systems tend to be rigid and constraining under authoritarian regimes. Conversely, I was expecting that in a democracy, boundaries would loosen and multiple channels of participation and communication would emerge thus enabling actors to relate to each other in a more egalitarian manner.

By the time I started field work in 1987, Argentina had already been under the rule of a freely elected president for four years. Contrary to my initial expectations, very little had changed in the Yacyretá relocation process since that political transformation. Shortly after my first interviews and field observations, I realized that most of my assumptions expressed my desires and my romanticized version of democracy rather than representing a regular behavior of human groups in processes of political change.

When I attended seminars organized by social scientists and planners to discuss social aspects of large-scale projects or when I read the recent literature on Latin America, I was always amazed to observe the frequency with which various professionals associated the process of democratization with greater participation and communication.³ For example, a sociologist working as a

³ Numerous articles discuss the relationships among democratic governments, communication and the emergence of participatory forms of organizing (see for example, Lechner 1986, Nun 1987). For discussions on participation of intellectuals in processes of redemocratization, see Brunner and Barrios 1987.

consultant on hydroelectric projects asserted at a workshop on methodologies for assessing social and environmental impacts that "participation and communication increased with democracy and thus transformed development policies of hydroelectric projects." This view reflects the recovery and resignification of the concept of democracy by Latin American social scientists after decades of military dictatorship. The same authors who talked about "formal democracy" in a derogatory way during the '60s and early '70s and promoted revolution as a means to gain control of the political apparatus now promote a democratic form of government based on a collective order achieved through permanent negotiation over the rules of the game, respect for individual and group differences, and through defense of a "utopian horizon" geared to attain popular sovereignty and consensus (see Lechner 1986). Although many of the new advocates of democratic forms are highly critical of the way democracy was understood by political scientists in the '60s (Cf. Portantiero 1987, Nun 1987), social scientists involved in practical issues such as development projects tend to oversimplify the theoretical assumptions, and as a result, their approach does not differ much from the older liberal perspectives.

After critically examining the "democratic syndrome" that impinged upon the way many of my colleagues and I interpreted post-authoritarian phenomena, I started to view

the process of communication -and participation- in a different manner. Instead of seeing them as necessary outcomes of a process of democratization, and thereafter constitutive elements of democratic forms of government, I started to regard communication and participation as phenomena in which politicians and social scientists are very often implicated, since they are in part the architects of that which they seek to describe. Indeed, in the Yacyretá relocation project, it was the social scientists themselves who suggested the introduction of participatory forms, who designed communication programs and who insisted that social workers should encourage the organization of grass-roots groups into neighborhood commissions, in the understanding that if this goal were achieved, it would be a positive indicator of a successful -and democratic- development project. Thus, this desirable behavior did not grow spontaneously out of democratic conditions, but was stimulated, cultivated and modeled by social science.

Obviously, these efforts did not suffice because they stemmed from wrong assumptions about social processes and social practices. These action strategies -an example of the neopopulist model of social intervention discussed in the introductory chapter- generally fail because they do not acknowledge power differentials. The Yacyretá project has followed neither a fully authoritarian nor a neopopulist model of social intervention. Throughout EBY's history,

different members of the relocation agency tried to enforce both forms of action, although in practice the authoritarian model prevailed. The planning bureaucracy and its experts controlled most of the relocation process during the military dictatorship and during the democratic government of Alfonsín. This fact made EBY's staff and the affected population think that nothing had changed since the installation of a freely elected president. To them, the initial structure of EBY continued to be as rigid as before, and they maintained that there had been no significant changes in decision-making procedures.

For some time, I went along with the widespread belief that EBY had remained the same despite the political changes. This view on the relocation process persisted during most of my field work. It took me a while to realize that I was participating in a collective representation of the relocation agency, one which depicted it as autonomous and powerful. Such a view, which was surely partially true, was instrumental to the purposes of the agency's decision makers, as it helped dissuade attempts to influence policies or to confront authorities. However, the more I detached myself from Posadas and the Yacyretá hydroelectric project, the more it became apparent that some small changes, seemingly irrelevant when they emerged, had indeed produced long-lasting effects in combination with or added to other changes. For example, the affected population gradually

noticed that Church representatives were not the only individuals who could intercede on their behalf. Furthermore, the so-called beneficiaries, realizing that priests were not the most effective under the new situation, started to make use of a wide range of mediators such as representatives of political parties, human right groups, and various grass-root organizations. Although at first none of them seemed to affect the functioning of EBY, the agency eventually had to respond to and accommodate to the increase of mediating options and interlocutors.⁴ Surely, what occurred was neither a total rupture with the past nor a profound transformation. Thus, although democracy does not inevitably and even magically bring about a transformation of these projects, it does open up possibilities and choices. It enables the emergence of a greater range of forces that struggle to impose their own project. In Yacyretá it gave room to the competition of various groups that attempted to gain control-and representation- of the population's demands. But the increase of options does not necessarily guarantee more transparent procedures. It may, as it did, multiply rumors and distorted messages as each agency comes to negotiation with its own hidden -and sometimes overt-agenda.

⁴ As Julio Cotler (1969) pointed out, one of the major positive advantages of government mediation was to encourage communication among client participants, overcoming hierarchical channels.

Anthropologists and development projects

In the previous chapters, I intended to recover the context in which messages were produced, interpreted and transformed by the various actors who related to the development project. I believed that it was crucial to recover historical processes to understand the dynamics of interaction among participants in the Yacyretá hydroelectric project.

My recovery of history aimed at disclosing what is generally masked and negated in most development projects: structural inequalities rooted in concrete, historical processes. Landowners, intruders, occupants with precarious title deeds who come to negotiate Yacyretá relocation rights did not emerge in a vacuum. The hydroelectric project had mobilized and orchestrated the same kind of social actors who had participated in previous regional systems of social relations. Nearly a hundred years ago newcomers to Misiones became rich through developing a river-based economy that took advantage of the available local labor force and plentiful natural resources. A century later, the Yacyretá hydroelectric project brings back together the descendants of those who formed the local bourgeoisie and the *mensúes* who hired their labor force through exploitative contracts. While consulting chronicles and analyzing interviews I was startled at the similarities of both situations. The same

arguments, the same biases and the same clichés had been used in both occasions to legitimize situations in which power is distributed unevenly. While in the past, culture and history of the mensúes was devalued, negated and often depicted as wild and savage, in the present, the affected population is sometimes described as non-civilized, invisible -as one newspaper article literally said-, and as people without history sharing the same fate as many of the millions of men and women of the world described in Eric Wolf's 1982 book.

Both in the present and in the past, state agencies (the provincial and municipal government and Yacyretá) played similar roles, based on the same grounds: they had to civilize the poor. They made the population visible through manipulating it with various procedures such as counting it. They rescued it from tradition and wilderness through educating it and marrying its couples.

When the project was announced and negotiations among landowners, the affected population, Yacyretá, and government agencies started, the dynamics of interaction were oriented by previous experiences of the different actors. Such experiences shaped present encounters and set constraints on communication processes. This does not mean however, that there is no room for transformation, but illustrates the conditioned scenario where present action takes place.

The context in which action occurs, is not a neutral arena where messages are transmitted with a univocal meaning. The Yacyretá project shows how various words are assigned multiple meanings in accordance with the various positions actors acquired throughout the relocation process and their previous participation in the existing system of social relations. It is a mistake to overemphasize the power of the word in development strategies. Such a view presupposes a communality of codes which this study has put into question. It would be naive to expect various actors participating in a consensual dialogue based on shared claims to validity leading to a direct understanding (Habermas 1979:209). Most members of the affected population do not trust what is said. To them, most messages and interlocutors are lies and liars. During the endless process of relocation, the relocated population has heard promises of deadlines that were never met, has seen that some neighbors were resettled without being holders of appropriate title deeds and suffered floods and hail storms which worsened their living conditions. As a result, they became increasingly suspicious of everything EBY's agents told them and came to either read between lines or to assign meaning to the most varied actions, natural processes and things. The relocated population now believes in what is tangible such as title deeds, a house and a frightening flood. Those, and not words, are the true communicators.

But does this mean that we have to abandon all hope of participating in development projects and improving communication? Do we, anthropologists, have anything to say in such processes? I believe we do.

In fact, such questions have also guided my study. As a University professor, I am in charge of a course on Applied Anthropology in which I pose the question of what anthropology in use should be about. This concern has oriented my research on the Yacyretá hydroelectric project as I aimed at analyzing the practice of social scientists and anthropologists in particular with the purpose of thinking alternatives to improve our contributions.

In reading the previous chapters it is apparent that throughout the project, a great amount of information was either distorted or concealed. Manipulation of messages is not an exclusive strategy of power holders, all participants in the relocation process are involved in this game and they do not know it is being played -although very few acknowledge it. Throughout the study I kept wondering who benefits from this. I also asked myself why the affected population made so limited claims. To some outsiders, the absence of resistance to the project was a sign of successful social planning: I think otherwise. It cannot be maintained that there was no discontent just because it was not overtly expressed. The special circumstances under which the project evolved inhibited open and free discussion of

problems related to resettlement. I feel that the population had put

up with many inconveniences only because the agency was promising something they desired: houses that would improve their living conditions.

When in the introductory chapter I spoke of the two models of social intervention -the neopopulist and the authoritarian- I was basically referring to two modes of planning policies which never appear in practice in pure form. Most projects have elements of both although the authoritarian prevails while the neopopulist serves as a rhetorical device to appeal to the general public. Although I emphasized the practical aspects of such models I was aware that both correspond to heated theoretical debates as the Luhman and Habermas controversy (Habermas 1975:133) or the ongoing discussion about the priority of "structure or agency" (cf. Giddens 1984, Smith 1988, Ortner 1984). In this study, I followed an alternative model to analyze how processes of communication occur. The model attempted to bridge the gap between the two other approaches through considering both structural aspects and the permanent transformation of such aspects through the active role of purposeful historical actors. This way of viewing the process should have practical implications. Hopefully, planning strategies should follow the guidelines provided by this alternative model. Planners must be aware that the

development agency is an active actor in the resettlement process and thus, the influence of staff members and the agency as a whole must be monitored throughout project implementation. On the other hand, social planners should be aware that words do not have a universal univocal meaning and therefore, they should check permanently how messages are consumed both among members of an affected population and among staff members.

Very few resettlement projects have anthropologists and other social scientists working at the development agency. Yacyretá is one of the few exceptional cases where professionals of this kind have participated in the different stages. Does this fact make a difference? I believe it does. The role of my colleagues has not been an easy one. They had to face the opposition of other professionals who do not understand our role in planning and also had to deal with conflicts among professionals from the various social disciplines represented in the project.

What difference did it make to have anthropologists in the project? They managed to impose a relocation policy which encourages resettlement in new houses instead of "reproducing poverty" as most of similar projects do. Indeed, had it not been for the mediation of anthropologists, decision makers would have either displaced men and women without providing anything in replacement or they would have encouraged the choice of compensation money

which would have had serious consequences given rampant inflation and the unstable economic conditions of Argentina.

What anthropologists did is another aspect of communication processes we must consider in these kinds of projects. Their theoretical knowledge on the poor was used to confront positions maintaining for example, that the affected population should not be given brick or concrete houses because they are "culturally" adapted to their huts. They constantly had to do lobbying to defeat biased arguments. This role of mediator and/or translator has always been stressed on analyses of applied anthropology. Although it has its limitations -nobody can guarantee that the translation is rightly interpreted- it helps, however, to reach a better understanding of participants in the process.

Although development is generally in itself hierarchical and authoritarian -it imposes a process of change decided and executed from above- it is not a solid, omnipotent, and permanent force which cannot be transformed. As social scientists we have an important role to play through unveiling the political forces at work and thus contributing to the negotiating power of the subordinated groups.

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