

PARAGUAY SOJERO

SOY EXPANSION AND ITS VIOLENT ATTACK ON LOCAL
AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN PARAGUAY

REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE



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**ESTA ES LA TIERRA DE JUANA
DE LA JUANA QUE NO TIENEN TIERRA
ESTA ES JUANA ES JUANA SIN TIERRA
Y POR ESO ES JUANA SIN PAN**

**ESTA ES LA TIERRA DE JUANA
A QUIEN ROBARON SU TIERRA
-¡ PEDILA JUANA!
-¡ TÓMALA JUANA!
-¡ PÉGALES JUANA!**

**-¡ Y LUEGO SEMBRA TU TIERRA!
-¡ Y LUEGO AMASA TU PAN!**

**ESTA ES LA TIERRA DE JUANA
DE LA JUANA QUE TENDRÁ SU TIERRA**

**ESTA JUANA SERÁ JUANA TIERRA
Y PARA TODOS JUANA PAN.**

Carmen Soler poetisa Paraguaya

Foreword

This report, produced by Grupo de Reflexión Rural, was presented at the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP8) to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 3rd Meeting of the Parties (MOP3) to the Biosafety Protocol, held in Curitiba, Brazil, March 13-31 2006.

The aim of this report is to expose the reality of the agroexport model that is dictated by the neoliberal ideology promoted by wealthy nations, and adopted by national governments of the South. This report provides detailed examples of the people whose lives and environments are being destroyed by the advancement of 'green deserts' like soy, but who are still resisting and fighting for their way of live.

This report was made possible only because of the people in Paraguay who have provided us with their testimonies and other essential information. Especially we want to thank Jorge Galeano and the people of Tekojoja and Movimiento Agrario y Popular, Tomas Palau from BaseIS, the women of CONAMURI, Fermin Bobadilla and Belarmino Balbuena of the MCP for their time, vision and generosity.

We want to specially thank our friends Nina Holland, An Maeyens and Taylor Stevenson that helped to publish this report, by doing all technical and essential work such as correcting, revising and editing.

We call upon the international community to learn of the struggles in Paraguay, and support the people and organisations involved in any way they can. We plea human rights organisations to monitor the situation in Paraguay.

We hope this report will be widely used to this end.



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Executive summary

In Paraguay, the expansion of (GM) soy production by Brazilian *sojeros*¹, supported by biotech and agrochemical corporations, local and national authorities, and the financial sector, is currently the main cause of violence against small farmers and their organisations, and of severe damage to people's health and to food crops due to fumigations with agrochemicals.

The international trade regime embodied by the World Trade Organisation and MERCOSUR allocate countries like Paraguay the role of provider of basic agricultural commodities for Northern markets. Both biodiversity and diverse agricultural systems representing food and employment for many people, are rapidly being displaced by Roundup Ready soy plantations. Paraguayan society at large does not benefit from the soy exports, not even in tax revenues. Large parts of the rural population are forced to move to the city slums or abroad. The only beneficiaries are (mostly) Brazilian *sojeros* and multinationals that dominate the food chain, from grain traders to seed companies and banks.

Paraguay has a long history of land conflicts, in which *campesino* and indigenous communities have continuously been losing territory. Foreign domination, illegal land distribution and military dictatorships have all played a role in creating a deeply divided society of a small elite of haves, and a large rural and urban population of have nots. Paraguay's current government has intensified repression against peasant organisations again, using the pretext of fighting 'terrorism'.

The cases of violent land evictions and fumigation of people and their crops mentioned in this report are just a few examples of the 'other face' of the agro-export model that Paraguay signed up to. In the community of Tekojoja, front line of soy invasion, Brazilian *sojeros* carried out two violent evictions displacing 56 families, burning their houses and robbing their possessions. During the last eviction, two people were shot dead. The land these people lived on was illegally sold to the Brazilians. Similar land conflicts are happening in other regions where the soy frontier is advancing, like in Santiago del Estero and Cordoba (Argentina).and Rio Grande do Sul (Brasil).

The widespread fumigations of Roundup Ready soy fields contaminates air and water, destroys food crops, kills animals and people, and causes severe health problems. The family of Petrona Villasboa lost one son to fumigations by soy producers. Both soy producers are facing a two year jail sentence, but while appealing, they are making the family's life very difficult. The case of Alto Parana shows the recognition of the Paraguayan authorities of the disastrous situation caused by fumigations with agrotoxics, but also its refusal to do anything about it.

Despite the political repression, there has been a lot of resistance to land evictions, land reoccupations and public protests. *Campesino* and women organisations like Movimiento Agrario y Popular (MAP) and CONAMURI are carrying actions and legal battles, fighting against the expansion of soy into the communities. At national level, the Frente por la Soberania y la Vida, a broad platform of social and syndical movements, has been successful in stopping the privatization of the public banks and services.

Big conservation NGOs like WWF are initiating projects aimed at protecting remaining forests from soy expansion. However, their strategy to cooperate closely with the soy sector and with USAID has caused great mistrust from peasant organisations.

¹ Soy producers

The situation in Paraguay is also not unique in the sense that it goes against the objectives of international environmental agreements like the Biodiversity Convention. However, the Convention has so far failed to clearly identify industrial monocultures as one of the main threats to biodiversity to object strongly to its advancement. Even if it had, UN conventions lack a proper enforcement mechanism.



Drawing of Yisili Acanda Gonzalez as reaction on the death of Silvino caused by fumigation of agrotoxics.

Introduction

Paraguay is a country of extremities, with a long history of wars and repression of the rural and indigenous population by a small ruling class (see also box 1). As a country that is hardly noticed by the world media, corporate information channels from their perspective have nevertheless a clear view on the country's economical 'advantages': abundant cheap land, no sound regulatory system for the use of agrochemicals or other environmental concerns, human rights non-existent, and insignificant taxes on agricultural export commodities. For agribusiness, Paraguay is an ideal location to expand the production of agricultural commodities like soy to serve the world market.

Agricultural products are the mainstays of the Paraguayan economy, accounting for 95% of the value of exports. The principal export commodities are soybeans, cotton, meat, edible oils, electricity, wood and leather. Soy is the star of the Paraguayan exports, representing more than 50% of the country's sales abroad and its contribution represents 10% of the GDPⁱ.

Genetic engineering is playing a key role in the current trend in which agricultural systems around the world are being turned into (even more) polluting, labour-less producers of commodities for the world market. Roundup Ready technology is the best example in case. The rapid expansion of (GM) soy production has now become the main cause of extremely severe social and environmental problems in Paraguay:

- Land conflicts between local peasant and indigenous communities and newly arrived landowners are intensifying. The displacement and further impoverishment of small producers, without creating new employment in the countryside, forces people to move to the city slums of Asuncion, or if they can, abroad.
- Food security and food sovereignty of Paraguayans is being threatened. Several traditional crops which are an essential part of the staple food in the Paraguayan diet like cassava, maize, sweet potatoes and beans, are produced in less quantities as they are replaced by soy, raising local food prices. They are also affected by fumigations with agrochemicals on nearby Roundup Ready soy fieldsⁱⁱ. The fumigations also affect cash crops that people grow, such as sugar cane, cotton and mate tea bushesⁱⁱⁱ.
- Health problems related to the same fumigations are becoming massive, as Roundup is being sprayed on the fields planted with Roundup Ready soy without any regard to nearby houses and villages, water sources or fields where people grow food crops.

This report contains detailed accounts of these consequences. The information is compiled from diverse sources, most of all interviews with members of affected communities and peasant organisations, carried out by members of the Grupo de Reflexión Rural during 2005 and 2006, but also media articles and official documents, and previous research by experts as Tomas Palau (BASEIS)² and Ramon Fogel (CERI)³.

For a better understanding of the current situation, this report will first provide background information on relevant issues like land distribution, the actors involved in the introduction of soy production in Paraguay, and the regional trade agreement MERCOSUR, before shifting the focus to recent case studies of its current effects: repression of *campesino* organisations, violent land evictions and intoxications by the use of agrochemicals.

² Base Investigaciones Sociales www.baseis.org.py

³ Centro de Estudios Rurales Interdisciplinarios www.ceri.org.py

Box 1: Facts and Figures

Paraguay has a surface of 406.700 km². The river Paraguay, which runs from North to South, divides the country into two different ecological regions:

- The occidental Chaco region, which represents 61% of the national territory and where 3% of the Paraguayan population lives.
- The oriental region where the large majority of the Paraguayans live. This region is the agricultural heartland of Paraguay.

Paraguay has a population of roughly 6 million inhabitants, of whom 2 million live and work abroad. The country ranked 89 in Gros Domestic Income (4690 US\$) in 2003^{iv}. As much as 46.4% of the Paraguayan population lives below the poverty line and 21% in extreme poverty^v. In the countryside, this rate is higher. Due to migration, between 1996 and 2002, the rural population decreased by 6.3%.^{vi} Of each thousand children that are born, 37 die at birth, and 31 of each thousand that survive, do not reach the age of 5^{vii}.



Paraguay in South America



Map Paraguay

1. Land distribution and the introduction of monocultures in Paraguay.

Colonists and companies vs *campesinos*

The current Paraguayan landownership structure lays on pillars created after the 'War of the Triple Alliance' that ended in 1870⁴. As the defeated Paraguayan state needed to pay numerous 'debts' to the winning parties, successive governments sold public land, which at the beginning of the war had constituted 80% of the Paraguayan territory. Thirty years later, only half of it was left. Between 1870 and 1914 the state privatised 26 million hectares, largely in favour of a handful of foreign corporations.^{viii} British, Argentinian and Brazilian companies purchased some of Paraguay's best land and started the first large scale agricultural production. The main products were tannin, *mate* tea and tobacco^{ix}.

Around the 1930's, Japanese^x and European colonists settled in the east of the country, and started large scale production of cash crops.^{xi} The dictatorship of Stroessner (which lasted nearly 35 years, from 1954 to 1989) greatly encouraged the expansion of large scale agriculture. Firstly, the sale of land to foreigners was once again allowed. Secondly, Stroessner granted funding and land to his friends, under the pretext of a national wheat program.

In 1963, the IBR (*Instituto Bienestar Rural*)⁵ was established as the official institution for land distribution. Through the IBR, an estimated 12 million hectares of land ended up in the hands of the allies of Stroessner and thereby prevented a true land reform for peasants^{xii}. This practice helped to create the corrupt elite that up till today maintains its powerful position in Paraguayan society.

In addition, Stroessner supported Brazilian big landowners and foreign companies to acquire massive pieces of public land through the Land Reform Program. For example, 60.000 hectares were sold to an Italian enterprise AGROPECO S.A. (See also Chapter 3) The selling of public land to private parties was mostly illegal, as officially, only Paraguayan *campesinos* (small farmers) were eligible to receive such land.^{xiii}

Since the end of the Stroessner era (1989), many proposals for land reform were made by social movements, political parties, international institutions like the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) and even the government.^{xiv} However, none of these proposals ever got approved by the Congress, which is heavily influenced by the interests of agribusiness^{xv}.

Land Reform was further weakened by a change in the Constitution in 1992. The right of families to possess their own parcel of land in rural or urban areas was left out⁶. Only unused or unproductive land could be used for land reform. The 1992 Constitution also imposes payment of compensation to the original land owners.^{xvi}

⁴ 1865-70, a war between Paraguay and an alliance of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (at the instigation of Britain) on the other. The strong defence of Paraguay against the powerful invaders lasted five years. By the end of the war Paraguay was devastated and a considerable part of its male population killed as the entire population was engaged in supporting the war efforts. The application of the Triple Alliance treaty reduced Paraguay to 150.000 km². Before the war, Paraguay was one of the best running economies in Latin America and was a non-British aligned country. Ref. "Compendio de historia paraguaya", de Julio Cé. Carlos Schauman - Editor. 1998.

⁵ IBR is now called INDERT, Instituto de Desarrollo Rural y Tierras

⁶ One of the most controversial points of the 1992 Paraguayan Constitution is the elimination of the article 83.



Soyfields in district Vaqueria, Caaguazú. Photo: Nina Holland

Public institution promoting illegal land sale

The loss of land and the eviction of peasants are often initiated and promoted by INDERT officials. INDERT is the public institution responsible for Paraguay's Land Reform Program.

However, INDERT agents act more to prevent new land occupations and to stimulate land sale. According to peasant leaders, most of the land allocated by INDERT is illegal^{xvii}.

There are three principal ways in which land has been distributed illegally:

- During the dictatorship, land owners who supported Stroessner were given large amounts of land through the Land Reform Program. These were called "*Tierras malhabidas*".^{xviii}
- Mainly Brazilian migrants were allowed to buy up land that officially was part of the Land Reform Program. They were able to pay the INDERT (formerly IBR) directly in cash, thereby raising the commission of the department agents. This took place even though they do not fall within the guidelines of the Land Reform Program.^{xix}
- Communities have been losing family plots through the sale of land use rights, "*derecheras*". When landless settlers are allowed to stay on occupied land, they are not given legal rights to the land but, instead, land use rights. Even so, peasants must pay to stay on occupied land. It is very common that INDERT agents benefit from the precarious situation of settlers, offering them money to leave their land and sell their land use rights^{7.xx}. This is illegal, as INDERT's own guidelines stipulate that land distributed through the Land Reform Program is inalienable for a period of 10 years.

⁷ Jorge Galeano, leader of the *Movimiento Agrario y Popular* (MAP), reveals that INDERT through the Land Reform Program is charging peasants 390,000 guaraníes (nearly 70 US\$) per hectare over a long period. Meanwhile INDERT and the soy producers offer 10 million guaraníes (around 1700 US\$) per hectare for people to leave their land and give up the land use rights.

Box 2: Peasant *Campesino* culture vs Farmers in Paraguay

The diverse production system of the *campesinos* is radically different from the large scale producers. An example is Aida Martinez, a local member of CONAMURI. She has lived with her husband in the Guaira department, in the Central Eastern Paraguay for 25 years. The household is composed of 5 children, one grandchild and Aida's parents. The family plants sugar cane, cassava, peanut, bananas, guayabas, mangoes, pineapple, sweet potatoes, maize and different types of beans. Most of the agriculture is done with ploughing of oxes or by hand. The family follows the same type of cultivation pattern as the pre-Columbian Guarani communities 500 hundred years ago. They have two milk cows and some hens for meat and eggs. Most *campesino* families dedicate a part of their plot to cotton or sugar cane production to get an extra income for the household.

On the other side, the Brazilian and colonist settlements in Paraguay practice a highly mechanised way of cultivation as farmers do in the US or Canada, producing cash crops tailor-made for the market. They crop soy twice- three times a year, sometimes rotated with by maize or green manure. The soy production takes place in very large plots, resulting in a monotone landscape. This production system is heavily dependent on seed and agrochemical companies. In this system, the *campesino* is displaced, without creation of any new employment opportunities.



Abandoned house in the middle of a soy field, Itaipua. Photo: Taylor Stevenson.

2. Paraguay Sojero⁸

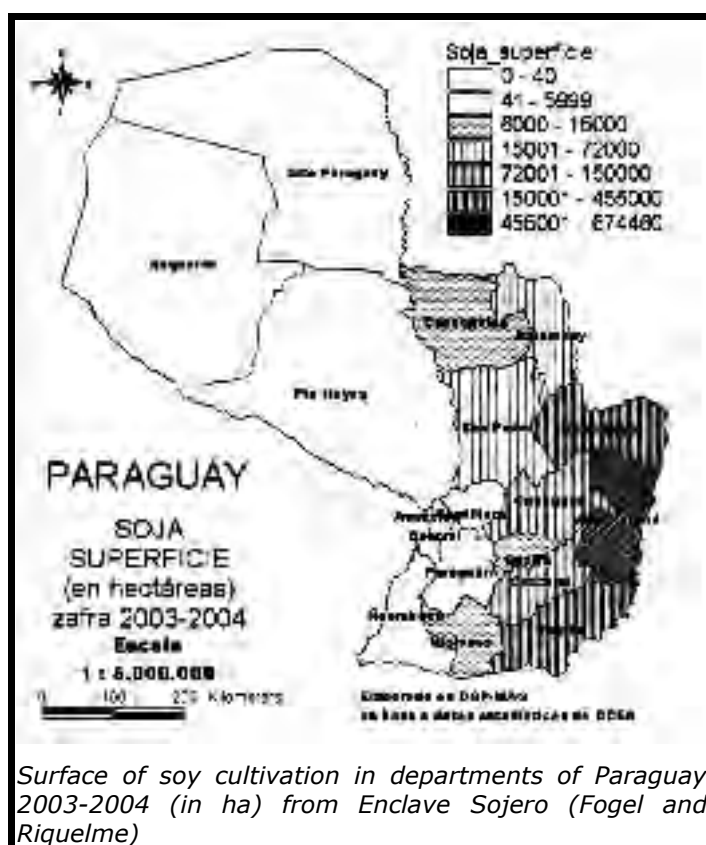
Paraguay and MERCOSUR

Institutions dominated by the 'developed' world, like the World Bank, applaud Paraguay's strong export-oriented agricultural sector and its membership of the regional trade agreement MERCOSUR⁹. In 2004, 36 million hectares of soy, in a total surface of 100 million of agricultural lands, were cultivated in the MERCOSUR. This represents 50% of the global soybean production and 42% of the global surface cultivated with soy. Soy and its subproducts represent 25% of the total exports of the MERCOSUR countries.^{xxi}

MERCOSUR promotes the opening up of 'new lands' by new transport and communication infrastructure projects that enable agricultural commodities to reach the seaports. In Paraguay, environmental groups and researchers are very concerned about the changes to the river courses of rivers to increase their width and depth to make them navigable in the dry season.

The expansion of soy plantations

In the '70s, the demand for soy on the world market grew rapidly. The US put an embargo on the export of soybeans. Soybean prices jumped, which encouraged Brazilian soy producers as well as some multinational companies to expand soy production in South American countries, including Paraguay. Soy producers from Brazil's original soy-growing state Rio Grande do Sul, began to venture into Paraguay^{xxii}. Since then, soy production expanded further inland towards the west, displacing campesino and indigenous communities.



⁸ Soy producer Paraguay

⁹ The Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) started to function in 1991, and it is formed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. More recently Bolivia and Chile have become associates to the economic area.

In the 70's soy expansion accelerated in the south of Brasil. In the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Parana and Santa Catarina large scale soy monocultures forced many small farmers to migrate to the cities or to more distant areas such as Mato Grosso, Rondonia and Amazonia. Many Brazilian small farmers saw an opportunity in selling their land plots in Brazil and buying twice as much in Paraguay. A testimony of a producer in 1977 from Villa Aurora in Alto Parana is revealing *"I sold 17h in Parana (Brazil) for 520.000 R and with that money I could buy 75 ha for 293.000 R in Paraguay, with the rest I will be able to built my house, pay the moving from Brazil, deforest the new land and cultivate 25 ha of soy and I will even have a reserve of money so that i can buy a tractor next year"* In the same way, Brazilian state owners acquired massive land pieces in Paraguay and took Brazilian farmers to Paraguay as land renters with a temporary contract to open up the land and prepare it for large scale agriculture.^{xxiii}

Land in the eastern part of Paraguay was supposed to be allocated to Paraguayan peasants. However, IBR dedicated most of the land to big land owners, principally foreigners. According to Ramon Fogel, nearly half of the lands distributed between the 60's and the 80's, were given to Brazilians. IBR was selling out public land with an average size of 1.000 ha.^{xxiv} Marcial Gomez from the FNC, Federacion Nacional de Campesinos declares that IBR was the main instrument for land concentration, putting 80% of the land in the hands of 1% of the population. Meanwhile, only 6% of the land is in hands of the 85% of the producers^{xxv}.

In addition, Brazilian soy producers have been favoured over small producers by a variety of other factors. The 'Banco Nacional de Fomento' granted loans (with funds from the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank) to Brazilians under favourable conditions, as they could show land titles^{xxvi}. Most Paraguayan *campesinos* don't actually own their land and only have provisional land use rights. Up till today, they are refused credits. For Brazilian producers, the Paraguayan interest rates of 13% were much cheaper than those in their home country. In addition, the Paraguayan government has been subsidising the use of fuel in agriculture, favouring mechanised production over human labour^{xxvii}.

At current date, the production of soy is dominated by foreign enterprises or descendants to foreigners. Currently there are nearly 60,000 soy producers in Paraguay, of which about 40% are Brazilian; 36% are of German and Japanese descent or are Mennonite farmers and only 24% are Paraguayans^{xxviii}.

Soy is now the dominant crop grown in the departments of Itaipúa, Alto Paraná and Canindeyú. In these regions, the remaining peasant and indigenous communities are surrounded by large GM soy fields. They suffer intoxication and diseases caused by the intensive fumigations to which they are exposed. The frontiers of soy expansion are moving towards the center of the country, more precisely in Caazapá, San Pedro and Caaguazú. Jorge Galeano from the Movimiento Agrario y Popular (see also Chapter 3) estimates that in the beginning of 2000 in Caaguazú around 90 to 120 hectares of soy were cultivated in small communities and this number increased to 1,000 hectares in 2003.

Paraguay is now the world's 6th producer, with 4,5 million ton of soy, and fourth largest soy exporter (2,8 million ton). As can be observed in the chart below, the surface covered by the soybean production increased by 15% between 1996 to 2004. Over half of the production is exported via Brazil, through the harbours in Paranagua and Rio Grande do Sul. The export of soybeans goes mainly to UE (46%), followed by Argentina (16,6%), Brasil (13%). Middle East (10%) and Canada (7%). The soy flour is exported mainly to Canada (69%) and Brasil (28%) and Canada buys most of the paraguayan soy oil (91%)^{xxix}. The biggest importers in the EU are The Netherlands, Spain and Germany^{xxx}.

Soybean production in Paraguay per year

Year	Total ton	Surface, ha	Production. tons per ha
1996	2.407.936	960.000	2,508
1997	2.771.000	1.050.000	2,639
1998	2.988.201	1.150.000	2,598
1999	2.980.058	1.200.000	2,483
2000	2.911.423	1.200.000	2,426
2001	3.502.179	1.350.000	2,594
2002	3.546.674	1.445.000	2,454
2003	4.518.015	1.550.000	2,915
2004	3.911.415	1.936.600	2,020

Source: Cámara Paraguaya de Exportadores de Cereales y Oleaginosas (CAPECO), 22/07/05.

Development cooperation programs

Ironically, international cooperation agencies have been important actors in the promotion of large scale soy production in Paraguay. Japan and Germany were the main donor countries involved.^{xxxix}

The no-tillage technology (i.e. direct sowing without ploughing the land first) applied to soy with help of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ¹⁰) in 1993. No-tillage was seen as a way to avoid soil erosion and decreased crop yields.

Japan has supported the settlement of Japanese agricultural colonies in Paraguay. In 1997, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) entered into a technical cooperation project with the aim of "enhancing the research capability of the Regional Agriculture Investigation Centre (CRIA), related to breeding, cultivation and soil management in soybean production". Strong emphasis was given to the development of soybean varieties adapted to the climate and soil conditions in Paraguay.^{xxxii}

The introduction of GM Roundup Ready soy

Roundup Ready soybeans have expanded steadily in Paraguay since neighbouring Argentina approved its production in 1996. The beans were introduced illegally to Paraguay until October 2004, when the first four RR soybean varieties were approved by the Agriculture Ministry. At present it is calculated that in Paraguay most of the soy produced is genetically modified^{xxxiii}.

In Argentina, Roundup Ready technology in combination with No-Tillage¹¹ or 'direct sowing' has enabled an exponential expansion of soy production. Crops that are resistant to Roundup can be sprayed with Monsanto's herbicide Roundup (glyphosate), without itself being affected. This allows a radically different production method. Instead of using ploughing the earth, rotation and selective spraying as weed and soil management, fumigation can be done by large machines or airplanes without damaging the crop itself. In this way, much larger fields can be managed by just a few people.

No-Tillage was introduced into industrial agriculture as a way to reduce the impact that this way of production was having on the soil. Although No-Tillage implemented in large scale monocultures may reduce soil erosion, it is not able to counteract the impacts on soil environment caused by continuous cultivation of the same crop, and the intensive use of agrochemicals as the only weed management.

¹⁰ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

¹¹ Not ploughing the earth to combat weeds.

In September 2004, Monsanto successfully negotiated a royalty collection system with Paraguayan soy sector^{xxxiv}. Monsanto's petition for the approval of the system, submitted to the Agriculture Ministry, was signed by soy farmers, seed producers, co-operatives and exporters. Monsanto promised the Agriculture Ministry that this money would be used for developing improved GM soy varieties for Paraguay. One month later, October 2004, the Ministry approved four Roundup Ready soybean varieties.

A small RR soy grower from Central Paraguay commented: *"The royalties are not a problem for me, we are going to pay 4% to Monsanto, and in exchange soon they will come with a new GM seed which won't need any agrochemical."* The agreement of the Paraguayan producers to pay Monsanto \$3 per metric ton would increase to \$6 over a five year period. However, no agreement has yet been reached whether the royalties are paid on seeds bought, advocated by the soy producers, or on production, pushed for by Monsanto. It is doubtful that Monsanto would be able to supply the entire South American market with certified GM soybeans for planting. Therefore, for them to collect royalties at the borders is highly preferential, as they will also be able to cash in on illegally used seeds, and production that is contaminated with Monsanto's seeds.

The willingness of soy producers in Paraguay to pay royalties to Monsanto is that, in Paraguay, the taxation of soybean exports is negligible: 1.3% on pre-established prices while, in Argentina, the level of export taxation is 23%.



Round Up Ready soy field. Photo : An Maeyens

3. Resistance and Repression: the violent face of the soy model

Increased land conflicts

In Paraguay, currently less than 2% of the population owns 70% of the land. The expansion of GM soy is now one of the main causes of land conflict, and consequently one of the principal reasons for the increasing number of landless peasants. As much as fifty percent of land conflicts, and particularly the most violent land conflicts, in Paraguay is attributed to soy expansion^{xxxv}. As a response to the increasingly critical situation of landless peasants, peasant organisations have organised protests like road blockades, land occupations and active resistance to pesticide spraying^{xxxvi}.

In 2004 alone, 162 land conflicts took place of which 118 involved land occupations. In the same year 66 land evictions took place¹². Interviews with peasant leaders of the MCP (Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo), CONAMURI and MAP (Movimiento Agrario y Popular) show that evictions never take place with prior notification, and all occur between 2 and 3 in the morning when everyone is asleep. The police demolishes settlements burning the houses, stealing possessions and killing the animals. District attorneys are present during evictions, and are the ones who order the arrest of the community members. According to Balbuena of the MCP, *"the attorneys tell the press that when there have been casualties or serious injuries, the eviction was successful. Nobody is convicted of mistreatment. People have submitted denunciations, but because cases occur daily the complaints are never investigated. As documents disappear, and no judge dares to continue the investigations, the denunciations end up in the archives."*

The resistance sparked a new wave of repression of peasant movements. In the last 2 years more than 600 peasants have been incarcerated in various regions of the country. Since the election of Paraguay's current president, Nicanor Duarte, 7 people have been killed, which means that now 93 peasant activists have been murdered since 1990^{xxxvii}.

Frente Nacional por la Soberanía y la Vida: land occupation campaign

In 2004, the Frente Nacional por la Soberanía y La Vida, a platform of the main peasants groups and syndicates coordinated a massive protest and a land occupation campaign. From September to November 2004, more than 80 land occupations were organised throughout the country. This mobilization challenged the populist discourse of President Nicanor Duarte.

The 'Asociación Rural del Paraguay' and CAPECO (representing the grain sector), responded furiously to the land occupations. Nicanor Duarte held a meeting with military and police forces, ARP and CAPECO. The latter demanded to be protected and required military intervention. Consequently, Nicanor decided to establish 18 new military bases in the most conflictive areas. Soldiers began to guard soy fields in order to prevent peasants to act against the fumigation machines. The repression exacerbated during the third wave of land occupations and the civil strike called from the 22nd to the 28th of November 2004^{xxxviii}.

During the months of the peasant revolt, 10.000 police officers and soldiers were mobilised throughout the country. In 6 months, the security expenses reached estimated 18 million US\$^{xxxix}. According to Balbuena, up till today, "police and military forces survey all meetings, block roads, stop buses to interrogate passengers about their destination and prohibit people from participating in meetings."

The mass media mostly takes the side of the big landowners. Peasant leaders are pictured as guerilla leaders and accused of getting trained by the FARC¹³ from Colombia. When the body of Cecilia Cubas, the daughter of a former president, who had been

¹² Centro de Documentacion y Estudios, Paraguay.

¹³ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas.

kidnapped by an extreme left armed group 'Patria Libre', was found, this was presented as proof of the militarization of the left, and specially of the peasants organisations. ^{xl}



Eviction of settlement of Maria Auxiliadora, Alto Parana during peasant revolt 2004. Photo: ABC

Cases of violence against campesinos

In the interview with Balbuena in September 2005, he can easily sum up a long list of examples of violence against peasants:

- A very violent eviction in Misiones (Island of Iguazú) resulting in 3 men and 2 women injured by gun shots, one of them received a shot in the back. Only after 15 days of legal battle could the doctors examine the wounded prisoners.
- In 2002 in Canindeyú a conflict with Brazilian estate owners left one person dead and one man wounded with a shot to the head, which caused paralysis in half of his body. The man was taken to a hospital and some day later the police arrested him. The MCP denounced the irregular detention and asked the court to have the man returned to the hospital. When Belarmino arrived to the police station, he found the man bound to a wooden board ready to be transferred to prison. Three days later the man died.
- In the region of Itaipúa, department of Guaira, a man that escaped from an eviction was bitten by a snake. He was then arrested without medical attention. His leg had to be amputated after 15 days because it had never been treated.
- A very extreme case of violence in Santaní: during a conflict in a settlement established 5 decades ago, a 15-year old girl was arrested and detained in an isolation cell for 8 days. When journalists asked why the girl had been arrested, the district attorney answered that the young girl was dangerous because "*she is very intelligent, she knows how to speak.*"
- During a national civil mobilisation in Resquin, San Pedro on the 18th of November, 2004 more than 2000 peasants were violently repressed. People were hunted and shot until the outskirts of the city and hid in the forest for 24 hours. The police destroyed the camp of the demonstrators and confiscated the personal belongings found at the camp.

Some of last year's events demonstrate an intensification of repression of the rural population:

- In February 2005, Luis Aguayo, leader of the MCNOC (co-ordinating peasant organisation) informed that there are 1,500 orders to arrest for activists and leaders, the majority had not been warned. Balbuena calculates in September 2004 that the MCP has 300 people with charges against them. For example in the region of Capiibary in San Pedro, where he is from, all 140 members of the

organisation have charges against them. Balbuena estimates that in the entire country there are 2,800 people with charges.

- On September 19th 2005, two police officers were paid by a large estate owner to murder the peasant leader Benito Gavilan in the community of Maria Antonia in Mbuyapey department of Paraguari. After shooting Benito in the head, the police fled, only to return later and terrorise the community in search of the body. Gavilan was miraculously rescued and hidden on an island for three days. A relative then transported him by river to a hospital, where he was operated on. Though Gavilan lost his eye and its surrounding cavity, he survived.
- On September 29, 2005, the fifteen year old peasant child Adriano Medin disappeared from his neighbourhood in Iruña-Alto Parana. On October 18th he was found dead on the property of the estate owners Ivo Jose and Douglas Muller.
- On October 9th, 2005, Esteban Hermosilla disappeared from his house in the department of Canindeyu. He was found dead and half buried, with signs of having been tortured, on the estate of Joaquin Fernandez Martin. As proof of having murdered Hermosilla, the assassins Waldir Presen Da Silva and Wilmer Presen had cut off Hermisilla's ear and sent it the man who had paid them to murder Hermosilla. Peasant organisations and family members have reported numerous other disappearances, which have either not been followed up on or are still pending.
- On October 20th, 2005, 50 police and paramilitaries evacuated and burned 20 ranches and robbed 2 motorcycles, in the 3 de Junio settlement on Tavai, Caazapa. More than 250 families had been settled there for more than three years before the eviction, which was headed by the district attorneys department in Caazapa and attorney Vidal Francia.



Eviction and repression during peasant mobilisations of 2004. Photo: ABC

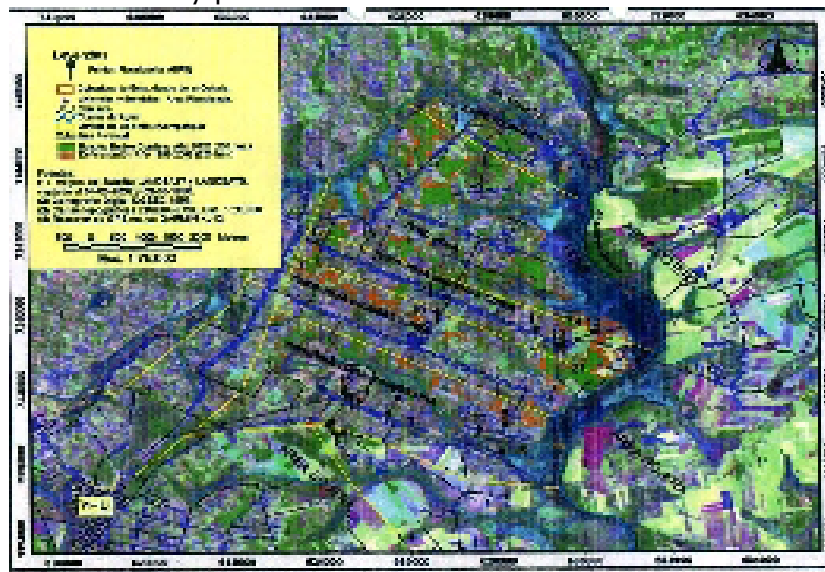
Legal actions are taken against peasant activists. People can be prosecuted, for example, for merely speaking out on the radio. Penalties typically consist of substitute measures like community service, in which case many peasants chose to plead guilty and perform community service instead of going to trial and risking time in jail. But by pleading guilty, one is extending the amount of time that he or she will be under police watch.^{xli} During the duration of substitute measures, one must check in with the police every week, which is a great economic burden. During this time, peasants are under close police watch and live in constant fear of being arrested again and sent to jail.

Posting bail is often not an option, since bail can amount to 10 million guaranis.(1,612 US\$). This is an inconceivable amount of money for a peasant, who sometimes cannot even afford to travel from the countryside to the city. If a peasant opts to go to trial, his

or her costs will only increase. Just to create a case file, paralegals charge between 150,000 and 250,000 guaranis (26 to 40 US\$). The average annual income of a *campesino* family reaches between 1 and 2 million guaranis. High legal costs are part of the Paraguayan government's method of dismantling the peasant movement.

The soy frontier in Central Paraguay: Tekojoja, the last peasant trench of Caaguazú

Caaguazú is located in central Paraguay, approximately 200 km from Asunción. It is one of the frontier areas of soy expansion. The town of Vaqueria can be considered as the front line of the peasant resistance against the agro-industry. Tekojoja, just outside Vaqueria, is a peasant community established under the Land Reform Program in the 70's. Jorge Galeano, leader of the Movimiento Agrario Popular (MAP) in Caaguazú, considers the Tekojoja settlement in Vaqueria to be the last trench. Tekojoja is home to 56 peasant families, and stretches 3,500 hectares. Approximately 200 hectares of this territory is in dispute between peasants and soy producers attempting to illegally purchase the land for GM soy production.



This map shows how monocultures are expanding from the east towards the Tekojoja community and surrounding the peasants fields.

Tekojoja is currently threatened by two Brazilian families who are looking to purchase peasant land use rights (*derecheras*). The Opperman family generally buys 10, 15 or 20 hectares plots, but at the same time the family is an intermediary of the Arcario family. Ademar Arcario is the most powerful man in the region, who owns the local gas station and the supermarket of the town of Toledo, and 5 silos. Toledo is a former peasant community that has now become dominated by dominant Brazilian soy producers, most of all Arcario. Cargill and Overtreal also have silos close by.



Silo owned by Arcario in the village of Toledo, 12 km of Tekojoja. Photo : Nina Holland

MAP calculates that Arcario owns approximately 50,000 hectares of land in Paraguay. Arcario and Opperman have been acquiring land in different manners. Sometimes they purchase land directly from large estate owners, but they also acquire land by purchasing land titles from INDERT. Some of the titles are in their names, but most of them are under the names of their children, wives, brothers or sometimes even employees.

Therefore, the majority of the land titles in their possession are not legitimate. Mr. Leiva, a local car dealer, for example, purchases land for Arcario and has two of Arcarios properties under his name. Both properties were obtained from MAP settlements, though Leiva is a car dealer and does not qualify for the national land reform program.

The conflict in Tekojoja began in 2003 when a group of people realised how fragmented the community had become. Soy had invaded the community and 1.200 ha out of the 5.000 ha of the Tekojoja were soy monocultures. Jorge Galeano described *"it was a terrible period for us, every day we witnessed how 7 to 8 families were leaving their land. We calculated that 120 families had been expelled because of the entrance of the Brazilian producers"*. INDERT¹⁴ made a shady contract granting 13 agricultural lots in the region to a group of Brazilian soy producers. In response, peasants began a recuperation process in the 200 hectares in June 2003. Fifty four peasant families re-settled the land while the Movimiento Agrario y Popular initiated legal action to recognise the land as property of Tekojoja. *"When we made the first denounces in the Congress, we questioned the Executive Power as INDERT was selling land to persons not subject to Land Reform Program"* declared Jorge Galeano. At the end of that year, INDERT revoked the granting of 9 plots and redistributed them to the Sin Tierra.

However the Brazilians, led by one Brazilian producer Opperman, started legal action against INDERT. They lost in first instance but appealed to the Supreme Court. On December 3rd, 2004, judge Gladis Escobar, ignoring the Supreme Court, ordered the eviction of the peasant settlement, which left 46 houses burned and 20 hectares of crops destroyed. The peasants reoccupied again their lands. The people of the MAP related *"after the tractors had destroy our crops, they came with their big machines and started immediately to sow soy while smoke was still coming out from the ashes of our houses. Next day we came back with oxes and replanted all the fields over the prepared land. When the police came, we faced them with our tools and machetes, we were around 70 people and were ready to confront them. In the end they left"*. After that illegal eviction, the district attorney Escobar and the head of police chief Vaqueria were replaced from their positions.



Eviction in Tekojoja. December 2004. The sojeros destroyed the cultivated fields (left). The sojeros supported by the police burned 46 houses. (right) Photo: MAP

The soy producers took legal action again in 2005. On June 24th, the attorney of Vaqueria, Varela Samudio, with the help of attorney Jose Maria Tabogado and again under the supervision of district attorney Alfirio Gonzalez, headed the eviction of the land reoccupations. This despite the fact that no decision had been taken by the Supreme Court on the case of the illegal sale of derecheras in the region.

¹⁴ Before called IBR.

The district attorneys called upon 120 police officers to carry out the eviction, and community members were shamelessly attacked and beaten in the presence of the attorneys. Valero Sumida ordered the police to remove children from school and to arrest them, as if they were criminals. The police evicted and arrested community members, and were followed by paramilitaries who burned the community and flattened houses with tractors. The conflict resulted in 54 arrested families, 160 people including 40 children.

During the eviction, Opperman, along with various heavily armed men, entered the community in jeeps, trucks and tractors and vacated the houses. They then robbed, burned and destroyed the houses in the presence of the police and district attorneys. When the aggressors passed a group of peasants who tried to stop the trucks with the stolen material, Opperman and his men began to shoot at the group, wounding 5 and killing 20-year-old Angel Cristaldo and 49-year-old Leoncio Torres. Among the injured was Nicolas Gonzalez, who's arm was left shattered.



Eviction in Tekojoja. June 2005. Photo left: The peasants try to prevent the passage of Opperman's truck, who is stealing the household equipment of the evicted houses. Photo right : The truck of Opperman halts. An armed man starts to point his rifle towards the peasants. Seconds later he pulls the trigger which causes the death of Angel Cristaldo, Leoncio Torres and wounds Nicolas Gonzalez. Photo: Gregg Hetherington (MAP)

On that day, Ademir Opperman and his men were arrested and are currently under investigation for the murder Angel Cristaldo and Leopoldo Torres. Police found shot guns and many high calibre revolvers in Opperman's truck. However, Arfirio Gonzalez, the same attorney that ordered the two evictions, is in charge of the case of the double homicide and attempted homicide against the Brazilian soy producers. The producers have not been charged for property damage, nor have the police been charged for the illegal arrest of the peasants.

Many have strong doubts about the legality and accuracy of the investigation of the Tekojoja case. The police reported first that there had been a confrontation with peasants. Only when the statement of and photographs taken by Mr. Gregg Hetherington, a Canadian anthropologist who witnessed the incident were presented in the press, the police changed their report. After some weeks, most of the arrested were let out of jail. Opperman was given house arrest and since then disappeared.

Four hundred people including 223 children, were victims of the eviction. All were mistreated and three women suffered miscarriages. Though they have received much support from fellow peasants in the form of food, water and housing supply donations, the community is still in a state of emergency and lacks food and proper building materials. In the first months, all the families made a camp in the place of the shooting. Nowadays, every family has moved back to their plots, and they are cultivating again and trying to reconstruct their homes. They live still in fear, most of the children and adults suffer psychological after-effects but don't have access to any kind of assistance.

All the children that were evicted lost the school year as they refused to go to school in fear they would be arrested again.

According to Galeano *"if Tekojoja falls, soy will overtake the rest of the communities organised by MAP in the department of Caaguazu"*. MAP's departmental assembly of peasant communities of September 2005 is very revealing: The Yatay settlement of 530 hectares had been completely invaded by soy producers in 2003 but 368 Sinttierras achieved to legally recover 360 ha. The communities of Banderita, Guahory and Pindo, misappropriated by the INDERT agent Solis, have also been overcome by soy producers. Only 7-8 families still remain in each settlement. The community of Mariscal Lopez is now being threatened and 50 hectares have been lost through the sale of *derecheras*. Britez Caballerocue is a community of 1,025 hectares, where agent Castellano of INDERT is dedicated to the purchase of *derecheras*. The Mil Palo settlement houses 2,000 peasants, but is part of a 9,600 hectare estate, of which 2,600 hectares have been sold to the son of the Brazilian soy producer Arcario.

Where Soy Reigns: testimonies from Alto Paraná.

Alto Parana, in the eastern part of Paraguay, is the main region of soy production. The organisation 'Lucha por la Tierra' (Struggle for land) has maintained a *Sin Tierras* (landless people's) encampment since June 2003. The encampment was located just off Route 6 in front of the large plantation of AGROPECO SA covering 65,000 hectares for soy production.



2004. Camp of the landless of the organization OLT in front of the latifundio AGROPECO. Alto Parana.

AGROPECO is a Paraguayan company, operating with Italian investment. It is owned by a Paraguayan farmer, Geisser, and an Italian investor, Mendonetti. The peasant organisation discovered that this land had illegally been in use by AGROPECO as they bought the land from Cuatro Vientos SA, which belonged to the son of Stroessner. Therefore the land is considered '*Tierras Malhabidas*' because it was given away during the dictatorship through the land reform program.

On June 23 in 2003, 2000 heads of family occupied the land alongside Route 6 in front of the large plantation. Since then, three attempts to evict them were realised. The last time, November 3, 2004, 700 police and military forces participated in the eviction. The newspaper La Nación gave details of the eviction *"...several kids entered in panic, crying desperately. A nine years old boy, amidst desperation, he threw himself on the floor and begged that they not separate him from his father, the detained Antonio Gonzales. Finally, the district attorney decided that the minor could accompany his father, since he no longer had a mother. In the mean time, tractors proceeded to destroy and set fire to the precarious encampment they had erected on the property"*.^{xlii}

On this occasion, police arrested 13 people, who were all held for nearly a month. All of them are now obliged to complete 2 years of community service and must sign off every week in the capital of Alto Paraná. Sonia Meaurio was detained for being the wife of a community organizer Aguirre. Him had also received death threats.

The encampment was reducing in size because the INDERT¹⁵ was not responding to the situation. Many people dispersed, returning to their family land, or continuing to roam the country in search of land. In September 2005 only 80 families remained in the encampment, growing their food alongside Route 6. But when the estate owners began planting soy and started to fumigate their crops with agrochemicals only 15 meters from the landless encampment, all of their crops were destroyed. The families, who had nothing left, decided to travel to Asuncion to camp out in Uruguay Plaza in the centre of the city and make their demands more apparent.



People of the organization OLT camp in Asuncion after their crops had been fumigated by the neighbouring soy producer AGROPECO and they lost all the harvest. Photo : Javiera Rulli

In September 2005 Aguirre explained the situation in Alto Parana, the predominant soy zone of Paraguay. He said that AGROPECO's neighbour is a Brazilian community that owns the Iruña estate. It is estimated that at least 5,000 Brazilian families live in Alto Parana, where the minimum land size is between 100 and 200 hectares. Meanwhile in this same region, the OLT maintains 1,700 hectares between 4 communities, where peasants live squeezed into 2 to 4 hectare plots. The communities suffer health problems as they live surrounded by soy fields.

According to Aguirre, Cargill, ADM and Dreyfus all have many silos in the region. These companies also own land and control the farmers who supply them. On their estates, there is a strong presence of armed civilians. The Leon group, a private security agency which has many contacts with the local police, dominates the region. The group is heavily armed, owning 12 calibre rifles, 12 and 38 calibre shotguns, revolvers and cold weapons. The Leon group is as well present in AGROPECO and attacked landless peasants in the encampment various times. They survey AGROPECO's estate and arrest anyone who enters. The group is violent and has also shot and injured two people who entered the estate in search of firewood. Aguirre claims that the Leon group is also present on Cargill property.

The Bobadilla brothers, leaders of the MCP¹⁶ also mention Cargill, ADM and Dreyfuss, saying that the companies expand by directly purchasing land from small producers and cooperatives in the region. The cooperatives disappear when Cargill buys them. All of

¹⁵ INDERT, the land reform institute in Paraguay.

¹⁶ MCP is the Paraguayan Peasant Movement, part of the MCNOC and Via Campesina Paraguay.

this occurs on land designated for land reform, which is why the MCP has filed 10 lawsuits against Cargill.

Fermin and Jose Bobadilla are also from the department of Alto Parana, and come from the 5-year-old Santiago Martinez settlement. The community is named after a peasant leader who was assassinated in Caaguazu by a large estate owner in 2002. Sixty families reside in the settlement, which was created through land occupation, but which has not yet been declared a legal settlement. The settlement land is another typical case of "Tierras Malhabidas". The landowners were personal friends of dictator Stroessner. In the region there are 15 militaries who control about 50,000 hectares. Before the land was deforested and used to produce marijuana in cooperation with the government. The property titles were given out by IBR¹⁷, the former INDERT when democracy was reinstituted.

Another large estate owner in the region is the Brazilian Tranquilino Favero, who grows 60,000 hectares of soy in Naranjal and 10,000 hectares in Canindeyu. Peasant organisations believe that Favero is a cover name for a large transnational, which is also connected to Cardoso, a former president of Brazil¹⁸.

In the regions of Hernandayas and Alto Parana, Shell has purchased 25,000 hectares for reforestation, a typical example of carbon sinks in the South¹⁹. Fermin Bobadilla: *"The first year Shell planted eucalyptus, but has now deforested the land and is preparing it to plant transgenic soy"*.

¹⁷ IBR , Instituto de Bienestar Rural was the governmental organisation that started the national land reform program in the 60's.

¹⁸ Fernando Henrique Cardoso was the president of Brazil from 1995 to 2003.

¹⁹ A carbon dioxide sink or CO₂ sink is a carbon reservoir that is increasing in size, and is the opposite of a carbon "source". The main sinks are the oceans and growing vegetation. The concept has become more widely known through its application by the Kyoto Protocol. where monocultures of trees are equivalent to forest in consideration of carbon sinks.

4. Agrochemical fumigations and intoxications related to (GM) soy production in Paraguay

Use of agrochemicals

The table below shows some of the most important agrochemicals used in Paraguay today²⁰. As can be seen, several of these substances have not yet been approved or have been banned in the EU. Furthermore, some of the compounds passed in the EU are highly controversial like paraquat.

Not registered	Decision pending	Passed	Banned (date)
chlorimuron ethyl	fenoxaprop-P	2,4 D	atrazine (10/04)
chloroacetanilide	fluazifop-P	diquat	formesafen (7/03)
	trifluralin	glyphosate	hexazone (7/03)
		metsulfuron	imazetapyr (12/04)
		paraquate	simazine (10/04)
		propoconazole	
		flumioxazine	

The expansion of soy monocultures have caused a threefold increase in the import of agrotoxics in Paraguay. It now represents a business of 160 million US\$ annually, with an additional 50 million US\$ that are illegally imported. In 2002, soy accounted for the import of 75% herbicides, 68% insecticides, 65% fungicides and 75% of fertilizers.^{xliii} There is a lack of control on the use of agrochemicals by the government, which has induced a lot of smuggling of agrochemicals into Paraguay from Brazil^{xliv}.

Import of Agrotoxics (US\$)

Products	2000	2001	2002	2003
Herbicides	45.048.872	48.647.096	39.366.177	40.493.000
Insecticides	15.925.511	17.134.116	13.216.049	14.926.000
Fungicides	8.607.709	10.779.675	12.043.400	13.267.000
Fertilizers	44.320.000	52.573.820	49.867.953	91.395.000
Total	113. 902.093	129.134.707	114.493.579	160.081.000

Source: *Pecuaría y fertilizantes (Capasagro), Camarara de Fitosanitarios y Fertilizantes (Cafyf)*.^{xlv}

Roundup, the mostly used herbicide, contains ingredients like the surfactant polioxy-ethyleneamine (POEA), causing acute toxicity to people. The agrochemicals package used on GM soy also may include endosulphane, cipermetrina, Tordon (2,4,5-T), 2.4D and Mirex. Tordon is considered as one of the most dangerous agrotoxics. Mirex is a persistent organic contaminant used to combat ants, which has a long life span and therefore accumulates in the environment.^{xlvi}

The areas most affected by cases of intoxication are those with high rates of soy production. Mass intoxications happened in Gral. Resquín (San Pedro), Pireca (Guairá), 3 de Febrero (Caaguazú), San Pedro del Paraná (Itapúa), amongst others. These are clear indications that the problem is aggravating^{xlvii}.

During the months of soy production, rural communities suffer headaches and stomach aches, diarrhoeas and skin problems. In the communities surrounded by soy fields there is a high incidence of cancer, spontaneous abortions, premature births and birth defects

^{xlviii}

²⁰ It was condensed from a larger list compiled by AlterVida (Pesticides Action Network Paraguay) and with the help PAN in the UK, who determined the active ingredients and their status within the EU reviewing process.

The storage and transport of agrochemicals do not fulfil the security and environmental law. Frequent accidents have been reported. On November 12th 2004, a truck with over 2000 litres of agrochemicals crashed near Minga Guazu. Thirty people living in the neighbourhood had to be treated in hospital because of the toxic cloud. The truck did not fulfil the security measures required for such dangerous transports^{xlix}. Agrochemicals are also often dumped illegally. On February 8th 2005, 80 drums of Milonga 600 and Metamidophos Agrotec were found. Both substances are strong insecticides. The drums were found next to the river Quiteria, 3 km distant from the centre of Encarnacion, Itaipua. The drums belonged to the company AGROTEC S.A. In the same week another dumping was found in the neighbourhood of Curupayty, 30 km from Encarnacion. This time empty containers of 2, 4 D, Monocrotophos were found on an illegal dumping site. In March 2005, 300 drums were found buried in a land, whose owner was the mayor of the District Jose Pereira, also in Itaipua. This region starting to become a cemetery of agrottoxics suspected to be maintained by a group of corrupted public officials.^l



Impact of agrotoxics on child of the Mbo'i community, Caaguazu. Photo: Jorge Galeano (MAP).



Antonio Ocampo Benítez hospitalised because of contamination by agrotoxics

The Talavera Villasboa family

The best known case of intoxication due to fumigations of soy plantations is that of Petrona Villasboa's family from the Department of Itapúa^{li}. On January 2nd 2003, her 11 year old son Silvino was cycling home. The road he had to take is surrounded by soy fields. Soy producer Herman Schelender was fumigating his fields while Silvino passed and the boy was soaked with pesticides. When the boy arrived home, Petrona, not knowing what had happened, cooked the food Silvino had bought, that had also been fumigated. A few hours later, the entire family got sick and suffered nausea, vomits and headaches. Silvino, who had directly absorbed the pesticides through his respiratory and digestive systems and through his skin, had to be hospitalised.

Four days later, he was sent home. But that same day another soy producer, Alfredo Laustenlager, was fumigating his fields just 15 meters from the Talavera Villasboa's home, disregarding the wind which carried the agrotoxics straight to their house. Three of Silvino's siblings had to be hospitalised, as well as twenty other neighbours. Silvino did not survive this second time. His sister Sofia had to remain in the same hospital for several days after Silvino died. However, she was left almost blind. This time, the family also lost their fish, pigs, rabbits and chickens. Petrona and her husband had to leave their house for two months due to the family's health problems, during which everything was robbed from their house.



Poster of the Campaign of CONAMURI about Silvino Talavera and the court case against the soyproducers.

On April 2004, both soy producers were sentenced to two years in jail, which could be substituted by compensating the Talavera Villasboa family with 50 million Guaraníes (about 8 thousand US\$). But the sentence was overturned after pressure from powerful RR-soy producers, agrochemical distributors and local politicians from the Itapúa Department. From Petrona's side, only the witnesses were allowed into the court. The soy producers, however, were allowed to bring supporters in, which included local distributors of agrochemicals and local politicians. Schelender's wife is a local politician for Partido Colorado.

The judges, public prosecutors and medical staff, involved in the case were all transferred. A new trial was set for June 7th, 2005. This trial was postponed once again after pressure from the RR-soy lobby. Finally, during the second trial on July 7th, both RR-soy producers were sentenced to two years imprisonment, without the option of substitution by compensation to the family.

As revenge against the Talavera Villasboa family, Demetrio Funes, who testified in favour of Herman Schelender and appears in the papers as the owner of the land that the RR-soy producer is said to be renting, is now constantly threatening them. *"On the 2nd of July, the path that leads from our house straight to the main road was blocked. Some time after, our only milk cow was poisoned."*, Petrona says. *"Before the second trial, our lawyer Juvenil Viari from Encarnacion was offered 250 million guaranis to quit the case"*.

Petróna's life is a constant struggle travelling to and from her home to take her children to the hospital in the capital. Her crops continue to be destroyed. Without the support of CONAMURI²¹ and other rural and environmental organisations, the Talavera Villasboa family might not have been able to resist as they have done.

Ecological disaster in San Pedro del Paraná

On December 2003, a new disaster was reported in San Pedro del Paraná (Itapúa), another 'island' amidst soy fields. The department drew attention when the media presented the picture of 11 year old Antonio Ocampo Benítez in a hospital bed with skin sores all over his body. His mother said that Antonio often bathed in a nearby river and that his lacerations might be due to his exposure to the water contaminated with pesticides. Besides Antonio, around 300 other families suffered all kinds of health problems. Twelve people, most of them children, had to be urgently hospitalised with symptoms such as acute dermatitis, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, headache, fever, severe stomach-ache, diarrhoea and muscle pain. Hundreds of people also suffered skin sores and the mentioned symptoms, but did not need to be hospitalised.

A survey performed by the affected peasants showed that the losses due to fumigation of surrounding soy fields with glyphosate and the other pesticides amounted to 600 hectares of cotton, 200 hectares of cassava, 30 hectares of beans and 10 hectares of rice. The losses were calculated to be 400 thousand US\$. Additionally, permanent crops such as orange, mandarin, lemon, peaches and bananas were lost. Domestic animals and cattle had also been affected.

The reaction from the authorities was initially one of condemnation of the use of pesticides. The municipality of San Pedro del Paraná was declared an area of Ecological Emergency and a moratorium on the use of agrochemicals was declared for an undetermined period of time. Agronomist Walter Lezcano from the Centre of Peasant Capacitation and Technology said from the beginning that there was evidence that the contamination had been due to high levels of glyphosate and Paraquat used in soy fields.

A few days later, laboratory studies published by the Agriculture and Public Health Department and the Secretary of Environment showed carbamate²² residues in the victims urine, and glyphosate (Roundup) in two of the five water sources in Pindoyú, one of the most affected areas. Clorimuron Ethyl was found in cotton crops in concentrations 6 to 17 times above the maximum permitted. Technicians could not determine the concentration of glyphosate in the crops because, as they stated in their documents, they lacked the necessary equipment.

The Secretary of Environment said that they would demand that all soy producers respected the law of Environmental Impact Evaluation, since it was proven that most of their establishments were not authorised. An epidemiological research pilot project led by the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO, part of the World Health Organisation, WHO) was formed together with the Secretary of Environment in order to investigate the case.

Soon after the initial strong reactions, things changed and the Minister of Agriculture, Antonio Ibáñez, began dodging issues instead of answering the demands of the peasants. Ironically, Ibáñez offered 500 litres of pesticides and soy seeds to the farmers as compensation. The Public Prosecutor of San Pedro de Paraná, Adriano Ayala González was removed from his position and sent to another jurisdiction after he imputed several

²¹ National Commission of Rural Indigenous Women

²² Ethyl carbamate is used as an intermediate in the synthesis of a number of chemicals. Acute (short-term) exposure of humans to high levels of ethyl carbamate may result in injury to the kidneys and liver and induce vomiting, coma, or hemorrhages. No information is available on the chronic (long-term), reproductive, or developmental effects of ethyl carbamate in humans. An increased incidence of lung tumors has been observed in rodents exposed to ethyl carbamate by oral or inhalation exposure. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified ethyl carbamate as a Group 2B, possibly carcinogenic to humans.

Japanese soy producers suspected of having intoxicated peasants and destroying their crops.^{lii}

Resistance to fumigation of RR-soy fields-Jose Fassardi District

In the beginning of January 2004, in the José Fassardi District in Guairá, peasants entered directly into conflict with soy producers. They started to camp and to be on guard 24 hours a day around RR-soy fields belonging to the Gaguare'I Companies and Guarani Colony. When they saw pesticide machines "mosquitos" moving towards the soy fields, they used fireworks to alert other peasants, and within minutes they blocked the path of the machines. They also demanded the suspension of soybean exports and the eradication of the oilseed from the country.

At a meeting, soy producers tried to convince the protesters that the soy crops were at risk and demanded that the peasants let them fumigate to save them. To this the peasants answered that they based their arguments on reality. They said that if they saw that people got sick and their crops went lost, there was nothing to prove that they were wrong. They would go on with their measures until something changed. The action questioned the agro-export model currently in force in the country. They pointed out that it only benefits foreign interests, especially Brazilian, and leaves very little to Paraguay. They insisted that the neoliberal model should be eradicated and denounced that the government was supporting soy producers while abandoning the small and medium size producers.

The meeting was a failure and soy producers demanded legal protection and guarantees from the public forces so they could take the machines to the crops in order to fumigate. Catholic priests and deacons gave the necessary logistic support and food so that the peasants could carry on with their action. Public Prosecutor J. Domingo Vera accused seven of the peasant leaders of public invasion, severe coercion, criminal association and resistance to the authority.

Ypecuá, Caaguazú Department

In the early afternoon of January 22nd 2004, two peasants were shot dead and ten others injured by the Rural and Ecological Police Group (APER) in Colony in the District of Repatriación, Department of Caaguazú. The police shot at the peasants and killed 22-year old Carlos Robles Correa and 26-year old Mario Arzamendia. They are considered to be the first two fatal victims of police protection of RR-soy producers. This happened when around 50 peasants were on the way to Ypecuá to show their solidarity with other peasants that had clashed with the Police the day before when trying to stop the fumigation of a soy field belonging to David Enns.

The Board of the National Coordination of Peasant Organisations (MCNOC) held the president of Paraguay, Nicanor Duarte, responsible for the repression towards the Caaguazú peasants. The Board denounced that once again, the present administration only defended the interest of a few soy producers.

Ybyturuzú Resource Management Reservation, Guairá Department

Since early October 2003, peasant organisations have denounced the invasion of Brazilian soy producers and the introduction of RR-soy and related agrochemicals in the conservation area Ybyturuzú. The denouncements maintain that the products being used are highly toxic, harmful to people and the environment and a risk to the peasants means of survival such as water, forests, plants, animals, rivers and soil biodiversity. Peasants denounced the threats they had received from Brazilian soy producers in the area. Other documents presented at the end of January 2004 to the Secretary of Environment mention forest destruction, burning of pastures and obstruction of the water sources that lead to the Capi'i River. No serious response has come from the Government in Paraguay.



This is the place where Leoncio Torres and Angel Cristaldo got shot during the eviction in Tekojoja . June 2005 Photo: Nina Holland

5.WWF promoting Private Conservation and “Sustainable Soy”

The WWF global network has recognized Paraguay as a “global priority for the development of a pilot effort targeting reduction of the conversion rate of Atlantic Forest to soybean plantations”. WWF has identified new partners in Paraguay and internationally and has begun working with them to develop an urgently needed program for conservation of watersheds and high conservation value forest and implementation of better practices for soy cultivation in the Upper Atlantic Forest Ecoregion.^{liii} This program consist of diverse initiatives:

On 3 August 2005, the Social Pact, initiated by WWF Paraguay, was signed in Asunción, The Social Pact is an agreement among stakeholders from different sectors in society to conserve the Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest. So far, 29 parties, including the government, the private sector, and NGOs have signed the Social Pact. As it is an open document, more parties are expected to sign.^{liv} The government committed to avoid giving out land under the Land Reform program with remnants of Atlantic Forest, but support the land titling of the established indigenous and peasant communities.

The principles of the Social Pact also comprises the promotion of certificates and ecological labelling for the agriculture and forestry coming from the Atlantic Forest. WWF considers that in Paraguay, the Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest is the best land for agriculture. Certification of Green Products presents a potential alternative in their strategic actions. In that context, meetings took place with with CAPECO (Cámara Paraguaya de Exportadores de Cereales y Oleaginosas), APS (Asociación de Productores de Soja) and ARP (Asociación Rural del Paraguay).

CAPECO is an organisation mainly representing the interests of large scale Brazilian soy producers. Most members of CAPECO produce soy in units bigger than 300 ha. The power of CAPECO lies in the hands of 47 large producers with estates of more than 5.000 ha. Most of these lands have been acquired under irregular procedures, but now the ‘owners’ are engaged in talks about following environmental regulations^{lv}. CAPECO also represents more traditional and transnational interests such as ADM and Cargill.^{lvi} The APS also mainly represents the large soy producers. CAPECO, Foundation Doen (The Netherlands) and Guyra Paraguay²³ began a feasibility study of increasing agricultural production outside the remnant forests, focusing mainly in the fallow land next to the rivers Ñacunday and Acaray ^{lvii}.

In this orientation, WWF launched at the end of 2004 the proposal for a “Round Table On Sustainable Soy” (RTSS)²⁴ which had its first meeting in March 2005, in a five star hotel in Foz do Iguazú (Brazil). ^{lviii} The organizing committee for the Round Table consisted of the WWF, Unilever, the Brazil’s largest soy producer Amaggi, the federation of small farmers of South Brazil FETRAF, the Dutch development agency Cordaid and the Swiss supermarket chain COOP. The RSS was presided by Yolanda Kakabadse, ex-president of the International Union for Nature Conservancy. The meeting was financed by the Swiss Ministry of Economy.^{lix}

The idea behind this initiative is that soy production is estimated to increase by 60% by 2020, and much of this increased production will take place in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, at the expense of forest, savannah and other wild habitats. The WWF aims to manage this situation in a way that reduces habitat loss, but that is also acceptable to the corporations and landowners who seek to profit from the soy boom.

In this first meeting, Agroindustry and Agribusiness positions were predominant, which worried the more environmentally concerned. Luis Cubilla, executive director of CAPECO

²³ Guyra Paraguay is the local BirdLife International.

²⁴ now called Roundtable on Responsible Soy www.responsiblesoy.org

from Paraguay, exposed in the RSS about "the Responsible Expansion of Soy in Paraguay" and criticized deforestation caused by peasants in the past decades without mentioning that most deforested land today are in hands of big landowners cultivating GM soy. During his presentation he also commented: "thanks to the access to the biotechnology that we have right now in Paraguay, we maintain a high productivity, working with genetic materials that will be further improved" where he also avoided to mention that the regulation of RR soy in Paraguay took place only at the end of 2004, after a half decade of cultivating GM soy smuggled from Argentina.^{lx}

This meeting was widely denounced by social organisations around the world. During the event, 600 activists and peasants from Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil were gathered in the Counterconference of Iguazu organized by the Grupo de Reflexion Rural and Mocase (Via Campesina Argentina). The counterconference took place in settlement of the Landless Movement of Brasil. MST and consisted of expositions and workshops debating the social and environmental impacts of the soy model with a perspective on Food Sovereignty. In the last day of the Round table meeting a demonstration took place in front of the hotel to publicly reject the "Sustainable Soy" concept.^{lxi}

Revising the final statement of the Round Table Meeting, many organisations considered that it had failed to achieve any concrete proposals, or a tool to pressure and restrict the big soy producers. FETRAF, the only small producers organisation did not sign the final statement. Shortly afterwards, FETRAF and the Dutch Aid Agency CordAid left the organizing committee. At current date, the organizing committee predominantly consists of the private sector. Its new members are the Dutch bank ABN-AMRO, AAPRESID (the Argentinian GM lobby sector) and Guyra Paraguay (Birdlife International) representing civil society.

A third step in WWF approach of conserving the Upper Atlantic Forest is the privatization of conservation areas and the "debt for nature swap" mechanisms between countries. The Paraguayan government is now negotiating with the US government about how much Paraguayan wilderness will be offered to pay off the debt to North America. USAID²⁵ works with organisations like WWF and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) who are providing technical assistance, and help to establish environmental fund for the conservation of the Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest Ecoregion.^{lxii} In 2005, USAID made a proposal to the Paraguayan government for debt for nature swap of US\$ 12 million^{lxiii}. WWF as a partner to USAID is taking part of these discussions and will be a key player in managing these areas²⁶. Since 2001, Guyra Paraguay, WWF, TNC, NCI (Nature and Culture International), and World Parks have bought 5800 ha of forest land and expanded the reserve of San Rafael in Alto Parana. Half of the investment was financed by the 'debt for nature swap' between Paraguay and US.^{lxiv}

After WWF's proposal on "Sustainable Soy", Via Campesina Paraguay concluded that they had been misled. They joined workshops on the Social Compact about saving the forest, but at the same time negotiations were held with agribusiness to find more 'sustainable' ways to expand soy production. Therefore, the peasant movements decided to stop communicating with WWF. In 2005, the news about the 'debt for nature swap' proposal only deepened the mistrust towards the big international NGO's. The social movements coordinated by the Frente por la Soberania y La Vida reject any kind of privatisation of nature and public services.^{lxv}

²⁵ USAID's partners in Paraguay are: Instituto del Derecho y Economia Ambiental, Desdelchaco, WWF and Nature Conservancy. USAID is developing management of important ecoregions such as the Atlantic Rain Forest, the Chaco Dry Forest and the Pantanal Wetlands. In 2003 USAID invested 1 million dollar and Nature Conservancy purchased 9.000 ha, of 4.000 ha are adjacent to Bolivia in order to stablish a binational park along the border.

²⁶ USAID's partners in Paraguay are: Instituto del Derecho y Economia Ambiental, Desdelchaco, WWF and Nature Conservancy. USAID is also developing management of important ecoregions such as the Atlantic Rain Forest, the Chaco Dry Forest and the Pantanal Wetlands. In 2003 USAID invested 1 million dollar and Nature Conservancy purchased 9.000 ha, of 4.000 ha are adjacent to Bolivia in order to stablish a binational park along the border.

On top of all this, an agreement was made between Paraguay and the US to send US troops to Paraguay. The troops will have immunity while being in Paraguay and will give trainings in military bases throughout the country. This is extremely worrying to the peasant movement. In June 2005, Paraguay's Parliament gave the green light to the U.S. military for a series of 13 joint exercises to run through December 2006. The US has been allowed to have its own military base at Mariscal Estigarribia, a town in Paraguay just 124 miles from Bolivia's southeast frontier and within easy striking distance of Bolivian natural gas reserves, the largest in the Americas.^{lxvi}

The Paraguayan social and peasant movements have manifested an strong rejection to all these initiatives. There is a growing sense of invasion and loss of self control over the land, coming from a combination of the expansion of GM soy, conservation plans of the WWF and USAID, and the presence of US military forces in Paraguay. There is an increasing concern in Latin America about the strategic role Paraguay is playing for the US, in a time of radical political changes in the rest of the continent.



Demonstration of the counterconference towards Roundtable Meeting

6. Soy expansion and the Biodiversity Convention

The situation that results from soy expansion in Paraguay is not unique. Local communities around the world suffer similar consequences of the expansion of 'green deserts' like eucalyptus and pine plantations (Chile, Brazil), palm oil plantations (Malaysia, Indonesia), to name a few examples. Many national laws and international conventions are being violated in the process. Lack of resources of those affected and corruption, amongst others, prevent these laws to be enforced.

UN Environmental agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are supposed to counter the rampant destruction of biodiversity. However, these agreements lack an appropriate enforcement mechanism to achieve their aims, unlike the WTO trade agreements. The WTO has a dispute settlement mechanism that has the power to give economic sanctions to parties that are considered not following the rules.

But apart from there, there is a growing criticism on UN institutions for following too much the line of business and some governments of finding 'market based solutions' for environmental problems. The CBD's first objective, the conservation of biodiversity, is being undermined in rural areas around the world by the invasion of industrial agriculture, mining and infrastructure projects etc driven by multinational companies. The growing tendency is now to grant a more prominent role to industry to solve the problems they have helped to created in the first place. The CBD secretariat has developed a resolution, to be considered at the 8th Conference of the Parties in Curitiba, Brazil, to find mechanisms, tools and compromises to involve the private sector in the implementation of the CBD, in specific to meet the 2010 Biodiversity Target, and to investigate the option to create a 'Global Partnership'^{lxvii}. Without exception, proposals made under these kinds of initiatives (see also the Round Table on Sustainable Soy) involve voluntary guidelines for companies and never binding agreements.

The invasion of industrial agriculture and the displacement of local communities goes against the intention of various articles of the CBD, and is in contradiction with the work supposedly undertaken by its various working groups. The working group on Agricultural Biodiversity, for example, recognises that humankind cannot survive without its agricultural genetic resources. As the only real form to conserve agricultural genetic resources is for them to be used and developed in practice, industrial agriculture destroys this practice and is the main cause of genetic erosion in agriculture. The working group on Forest Biodiversity names conversion to agriculture as one of the main causes of deforestation. For one part, forests are destroyed directly for industrial agriculture, but for another part, it creates unemployment and displacement, which leads impoverished rural populations to also move further into natural habitats.

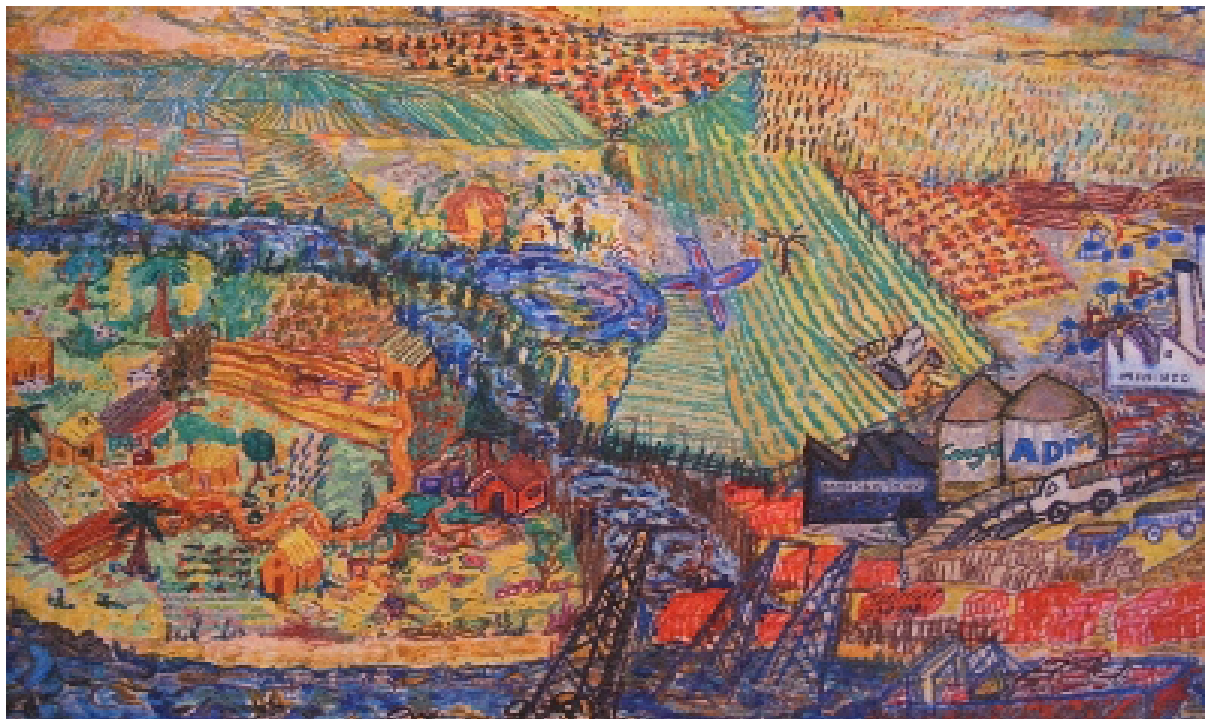
The CBD officially recognises the importance of the role of local and indigenous communities in safeguarding biodiversity, and for governments to respect and protect the traditional knowledge and practices carried by these communities. Officially, the intention is to encourage their participation. The advancement of monocultures causes the destruction of both natural habitats and agricultural systems, on which these communities are depending. No government has so far been even symbolically punished for promoting these activities.

Some specific stipulations of the CBD that can specifically referred to are^{lxviii}:

- Art. 6.b: *"Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies"*
- Art.10.c: *"Protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements"*.
- Art. 8.j: *" Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying*

traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices”.

The Biosafety Protocol, part of the CBD, deals with the transboundary movement (i.e. trade) of GMO's. Discussions on liability for GMO's purely focus on the technology, and obviously not on the wider social and environmental implications of GM based production systems. However, this report shows that a much broader evaluation is needed to assess the damage caused by the products of the biotech industry.



Agroindustry vs. Biodiversity. Painting by Pelusa Gonzalez and Javiera Rulli.

7. Conclusions and Final Remarks

The expansion of (transgenic) monocultures is the last phase in a long history of violations of the social, economical and human rights of the rural population of Paraguay. Multinational corporations have always played a major role in this process, in which Paraguay's natural resources were exploited and the population repressed. Corruption and impunity, lack of access to the justice system for poor people, lack of public health (because of privatisation), lack of environmental regulations or their monitoring, as well as cheap land, all contribute to make Paraguay an ideal investment opportunity.

Agribusiness promotes a production system based on a land empty of people and their culture. In any way possible, and with help from the corrupt political elite, they undermine people's self-determination and control over natural resources, above all land. Landlessness in Paraguay has led to a situation in which today, 2 million Paraguayans are living abroad. This money is what now keeps the country running, not the soy exports that only bring wealth to a few.

Despite ethical guidelines and a wide variety of greenwashing activities by agribusiness corporations, they knowingly take advantage of the situation as described above. In this way, factory farms in the North are supplied with cheap animal feed, but at great social and environmental costs. Also, Monsanto used Argentina as the launch base from which all MERCOSUR countries could be contaminated. Monsanto acted like a dodgy drugdealer in a children's playground, selling RR soy patent-free in Argentina, making the farmers dependant on it, and then starting to charge royalties. In Paraguay, thousands of hectares of GM soy were already being grown before the varieties were legally approved. Later, Monsanto was able to negotiate a good framework to collect royalties on their patented seeds.

The history of soy expansion in East Paraguay in the '70s, shows how Land Reform Programs have been used to displace rural communities and to open up new land for future industrial agriculture. The invasion of Brazilian producers into Paraguay was a result of a similar process of displacement that was taking place in Brazil. It is not a matter of one country against another, but a matter of one production system against another.

Some large conservation and development NGO's, like WWF, are involved in controversial projects like 'Sustainable Soy' and 'Debt for Nature Swap'. However, the peasant and social movements reject these initiatives as the situation is too critical for dialogues with corporations about potential 'green' niche markets, and beyond that, the external debt is seen as illegitimate. It is a worrying to see how some NGO's and aid agencies are only focusing on agro-exports of 'green' products instead of production and development for local markets. Equally worrying is the tendency to devalue the environment to a bunch of 'environmental services', and the privatisation of protected areas.

The Biodiversity Convention has so far failed to clearly identify the advancement of industrial monocultures as one of the main causes of biodiversity loss. The 'liability' discussions under the Biosafety Protocol do not cover the wider social and environmental implications of GM crop cultivation, as exposed in this report. If the CBD continues to allocate a larger role for corporations in its implementation, the Convention will become a commercial agreement on how to sell off biodiversity. This ignores the rights of local and indigenous communities, and the Food and Land Sovereignty they have always struggled for.

The expansion of 'green deserts' like soy, is leading to an agriculture without farmers, poverty and migration to city slums, deforestation and loss of (agro)biodiversity. Urgent action is needed to develop true, community based Land Reform. Development and recuperation of natural resources like clean water, fertile land and appropriate seeds,

etc. is essential. Communities, especially in Paraguay, need to be supported in their organisation and legal battles. International organisations and media should investigate and expose the human rights violations, especially the repression following the peasant uprising in 2004, backed up by the soy sector. International pressure has to be exerted on the Paraguayan government, as well as multinationals, to prevent future incidents of illegal land use and violence against rural and indigenous communities.

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