

For Mayans of Guatemala, Calamity Strikes Again

By JAMES LEMOYNE

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GUATEMALA — To an outsider it appears to be sadness, sharpened by fear, that lines the faces of Indian peasants who can be seen bent double under loads of firewood and dried corn in the highlands of Guatemala, where the horse and wheeled vehicles are still luxuries.

The Indians backed the losing side in a bitter guerrilla war here and have paid the cost. As the Guatemalan Army mops up the remnants of Marxist rebel units in its fourth year of a major counterinsurgency drive, the peasant villagers of the region are trying to rebuild their shattered lives.

"They will pretend any boss is a good guy," said a relief worker who has dealt with the Indians of northern El Quiché Province in recent months. "What they're doing right now is surviving."

The Guatemalan Army has promised to greatly improve the social conditions of the Indian descendants of the Maya who make up over half the country's population, living in poverty in a world that has changed little since the Spanish conquest in the 15th century. But there is little evidence so far of a sustained program of social change, although the army is much in evidence.

'Difficult Days' Recalled

Addressing a gathering of over 6,000 Indian civil patrolmen near the village of San Pedro Jocopilas in El Quiché Province, over 100 miles from Guatemala City, Col. Roberto Mata spoke of the troubles the Indians had suffered. Indian girls selected as "Miss Civil Patrol" looked on as Colonel Mata spoke.

"You remember those difficult days," he told the men standing before him. "I don't want to recall bad things but think of the past to learn lessons for the future. You are all witnesses to the negative experiences you lived through in this region."

The speech ended with an hourlong procession of Indian men swearing allegiance as they marched under a Guatemalan flag held by Colonel Mata. Several groups held signs with slogans such as "No more Communism" and "Down with subversion, we want more guns."

Civil patrolmen, organized by the army to guard their own villages, told a reporter they had clear memories of the "bad things" Colonel Mata had mentioned.

800 Reported Killed

They and several other Indians in villages in the Quiché region visited during a five-day trip spoke of the last four years as a sort of natural calamity that was beyond their power to control, much like the 1976 earthquake that crushed their homes, killing 23,000 people.

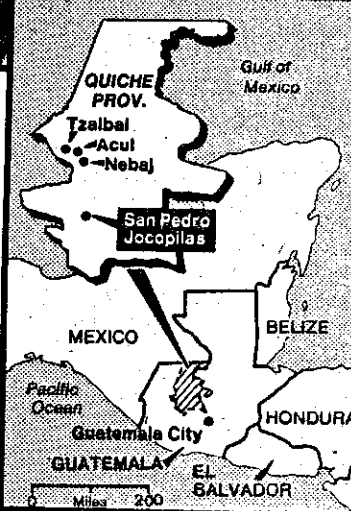
The Indians said they had once openly supported leftist guerrillas who promised them a better life. But then the army came and burned their villages and killed men, women and children. The Indians said they began to desert the rebels, at which point the guerrillas also shot many of them, charging them with treason.

"Eight hundred people in my area were killed," said Emilio Tabiz, 44 years old, from a small village near San Pedro Jocopilas. Asked who killed the people, he replied as if it were all the same: "The army, the guerrillas. Only God knows."



The New York Times/James LeMoynes

Indian civil patrolmen parading in ceremony sponsored by Guatemalan Army. Col. Roberto Mata, at left, addressed a gathering of 6,000 patrolmen in the village of San Pedro Jocopilas in El Quiché Province.



How many died is still unknown, but a recent national census carried out by the Government is unofficially reported to have identified over 100,000 Indian children who lost at least one parent in the last four years. More than 45,000 Indians refugees fled to Mexico, where they remain.

Civil Patrols Formed

The lives of those who stayed in Guatemala are unlikely to ever be the same again.

The army's campaign against the radically diminished rebels includes organizing virtually every able-bodied Indian man in the country to take part in local civil patrols, like those gathered at San Pedro Jocopilas, to guard

their own villages. An estimated 900,000 men are now members of the patrols. Although the army contends that their participation is voluntary, patrol members said they had no choice but to join.

The army is also building 74 so-called model villages to relocate Indian refugees, most of whose homes were burned by Guatemalan soldiers two years ago in an effort to persuade the Indians to stop supporting the rebels. The army denies that it burned the villages, but Indians of the area consistently said the army was responsible.

The villages are intended to house an estimated 48,000 homeless Indians. They are a small percentage of the over four million Indians in the country, living at the edge of government control in areas recently seized from the guerrillas.

Such attention appears to be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the Indians in model villages are protected by the army; on the other hand, people from several villages and sometimes from different Indian language groups are gathered in towns they had no say in designing, guarded over by soldiers who destroyed their former homes.

Villages Destroyed

In the model village of Acul, just outside the town of Nebaj in northern Quiché, a tall wood pole bearing new electrical wires stands in the broken foundations of a former home. Colonel Mata said guerrillas had destroyed the original village. Residents of Acul disagreed, saying the army bombed and burned their homes in 1982.

In Tzabal, the last model village beyond Acul, rows of small wood houses with aluminum roofs and newly provided electricity stand on a small hill. The straight lanes between the bungalows bear names such as New Life, Democracy and National Army.

Two men in Tzabal said they were from nearby villages that had been destroyed by the army. They said that there was no work and no food in the village and that they had asked the army to cut off the electricity because they could not pay for it. The army had forced several men from the village to clear a nearby hillside without pay, they added.

Asked what the army would do if a resident left the village without permission or refused to join the local civil patrol, one of the men in Tzabal said matter of factly, "They'd kill you."

Colonel Mata and other senior officers said in interviews that while the

new life of civil patrols, army supervision and model villages might not suit all Indians, most would adjust to it in time.

"It's a beneficial change," Colonel Mata said. "They've accepted it."

But a young Indian man in Tzabal reached a different conclusion when he

compared his past life with his new one. He said he preferred his old adobe house because its walls kept him warm and he missed the cornfields he once tended but now feared to return to.

"We are living in sadness," he said. "We were happier without the guerrillas or the army."

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Army Works Without American Aid or Advice — and Often Without Regard for Rights

Guatemala Crushes Rebels Its Own Way: Ruthlessly

By JAMES LAMOYNE

GUATEMALA — In sharp contrast to neighboring El Salvador, the Guatemalan military has defeated an extensive guerrilla insurgency, and it has done so without the assistance of American advisers and equipment. Virtually all United States military aid ended in 1977 when the Guatemalan Army refused to meet the Carter Administration's human rights standards. The Reagan Administration ended the seven-year embargo by giving Guatemala \$300,000 for military training this year, a symbolic sum that is unlikely to influence Guatemalan tactics.

In fact, Guatemalan Army officers argue that the absence of United States aid is one of the principal reasons for their success. Without American advice, they were forced to find their own solutions, they say. They add privately that, freed from the oversight of American Congressmen, the Guatemalan Army was able to apply ruthless tactics to destroy the rebels who once had the support of an estimated 250,000 Indian peasants in the isolated central highlands and controlled at least half the country.

"When you are faced with death you can either give up or fight," said Col. Hector Rosales, an army spokesman. "We fought."

The manner in which they fought offers grim insights into the nature of guerrilla war as interpreted by the Guatemalan military. Indian villagers and Western officials said the army adopted a scorched earth policy, burning villages suspected of backing the guerrillas. In a number of instances villagers were massacred, according to Indian residents and Amnesty International and Roman Catholic church officials. The rebels also shot many Indians who deserted them, villagers say. As the killing reached its height in 1982, Guatemala became something of an international pariah.

But repression alone did not defeat the guerrillas. In a development unique in this part of the world, the Guatemalan Army followed up its campaign of destruction with a highly sophisticated civic action program now in full swing. More than 900,000 Indians, virtually every able-bodied male in the highlands, have been enlisted in

local civil defense patrols. In addition, 74 "model villages" are going up in five isolated regions of the country to house an estimated 48,000 Indian refugees, whose homes in most cases were destroyed by the army.

Officers such as Col. Roberto Mata, commander of the once fiercely contested department of El Quiché, say the core of their policy is "to separate the fish from the sea," the guerrillas from the people. But the pacification program is intended to do more than divide the Indian peasantry from the rebels. It is also designed to ensure a degree of permanent army control over the Indians' lives so that the guerrillas can never return. Specially trained army civil affairs units watch over villagers. Army patrols guard the new model towns, making them virtual strategic hamlets. Although the army denies it, service in civil patrols is mandatory and Indians in El Quiché said they could not leave the new villages without army permission.

Other factors have also aided the army. Unlike El Salvador's rebels, Guatemala's guerrillas were disarmed and poorly armed. And unlike the Salvadoran Army, Guatemala's had experience in guerrilla warfare, having defeated rebel forces in the mid-1960's with the aid of American Green Beret advisers. Lessons from the earlier campaign are embodied in the army's manual on counterinsurgency, which bluntly states that "the war against subversion is total and universal."

Aid May Resume

With only a few helicopters, the Guatemalan Army was forced to fight on its feet. Army officers say their units learned to march, launching 30-day patrols that put them into direct contact with the guerrillas. "A helicopter is useful, but it's not indispensable," said Colonel Mata. "Without it we walked, or found a mule, but we did it." When asked why such tactics worked here but apparently not in El Salvador, Colonel Mata smiled and replied, "Who's advising the Salvadorans?"

Despite such bravado, the Guatemalans have recently begun to admit that they cannot easily continue to go it alone. Their plans for rural development and new model villages carry a price tag of more than \$300 million, which their bankrupt economy cannot provide. Senior army officers say they would like American help.



Indian villagers participating in a civil defense patrol drill in the department of El Quiché, Guatemala.

They may get it. American Embassy officials in Guatemala say the United States is likely to provide \$1 million for a pilot project to build schools, roads and clinics for model villages this year. More money could come later. Although the Americans say the aid is not intended for military purposes, these programs are planned and controlled by the Guatemalan Army as part of the counterinsurgency strategy.

Withholding aid would probably not have much effect on the army's tactics. Guatemalan officers believe their success shows how guerrilla wars can be won. The troubling question for the United States is: Are such victories possible without the use of tactics that would be unacceptable to the American public and that are outlawed by the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians?