

NOOT

Guatemala Trying to Win Over 5,000 Indians

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COBAN, Guatemala, Nov. 17 — The sun is barely up when the Indian refugees gather around a wooden pole to watch the raising of the Guatemalan flag.

The ceremony starts another day of "reorientation" aimed at turning 1,000 Indians who have spent some time with the leftist guerrillas into loyal citizens.

The seven-month reorientation program at the Cobán camp will end in January, but to make sure what is being taught has taken hold, the army will resettle the refugees on a nearby

farm that is being described as a model community with electricity, running water and available land. There, the diet of political lectures will continue, according to camp officials.

The Cobán reindoctrination camp in the highland province of Alta Verapaz is one of four camps where the army has moved 5,000 Indian refugees for periods of reindoctrination before they are resettled on large farms.

Denying Access to Guerrillas

The camps and farms represent the Government's answer to the problem of how to prevent the guerrillas from

receiving aid from Indians who live in small remote villages. As long as the Indians are under the army's supervision in large camps, the guerrillas will not have access to them, according to an army official.

The Government maintains that the Indian refugees in Cobán, who come from 11 villages in Alta Verapaz, were guerrilla supporters who came down from the mountains seeking amnesty. Church officials and foreign diplomats said that while some refugees did seek amnesty, many were forced into the camps.

At the camp, the refugees attend

political lectures in classrooms decorated with signs that read: "This is subversion: Terror, crime, death, falsehoods." During the day, which begins at 5 A.M. and ends at 8 P.M., they attend classes in Spanish, woodworking and agriculture.

"We need at least three more months with them; they came with very negative ideas," said Julio Corsantes, the camp director.

Camp Clean and Spacious

The Cobán camp, which is 60 miles north of Guatemala City, is country-clean, well-organized and spacious enough to accommodate the refugees comfortably.

But none of the five Indians interviewed who could speak Spanish seemed anxious to be there or to move to the farm.

"I want to live away from here," said a 24-year-old man. "I need to make some money, but they say there is no permission."

Although an army official said the refugees were free to leave the camp, the Indians seem to believe otherwise.

Some church officials and foreign diplomats said that given the army's strategy, the camps may be the better of two undesirable options. If the Indians return to their villages, they risk being harassed by the army or the guerrillas, and at least in the camps they are safe, these sources said.

However, few church officials or foreign diplomats expected the political indoctrination to work. One church official said that the political teachings tend to "go in one ear and out the other" because the Indians have al-

ways been distrustful of outsiders from either the left or the Government.

Church officials and foreign diplomats say the army successfully diminished guerrilla support in Alta Verapaz with an offensive in 1982 that left many sands over the Mexican border or higher into the mountains.

Those who remained behind were enlisted in civil defense patrols and others were either captured and brought into camps or willingly asked for amnesty. "The army strategy is to starve the guerrillas out and deny them the support of the population," a social worker in Cobán said.

"Under this strategy, the army can't let them return, and for the time being it's probably better that they stay in the camps."