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Exodus

Continued from Page 3



They would rather die in Mexico than return to Guatemala

10 days, he says, and often supplies are brought in by dugout canoes instead of planes.

It was not without some resistance from the Mexican government, Spector says, that he and his "partner," Stephen Stout, managed, during their two months in the Lacondon, to shuttle in gardening tools, seeds, wheat for the traditional Easter flat breads, and healing herbs.

And why does the Mexican government resist international assistance?

Spector says the government is itself racist and does not want the refugees to "get too comfortable there." This is particularly disappointing in Mexico's case, Spector says, because as a member of the Contadora group, Mexico has positioned itself as, if not a champion of liberation groups, at least as an impartial mediator.

And yet, supplies do get through. In March, Spector participated in a project called "Weaving Together," where \$2,000 worth of weaving materials were flown into Puerto Rico. Most was high cotton thread which the weavers had been used to working with in Guatemala.

The project has two benefits, it allows weavers to help support their families by enabling them to produce and market in Canada and the U.S. "the beautiful pieces that are their hallmark, and perhaps most important of all, it will help the people to maintain their tradition and culture," Spector says.

Eugene's own Guatemalan Refugee Alliance Consciously Involved in Action and Service (GRACIAS), sold Mayan refugee weavings during last weekend's "Fiesta De La Paz."

Resignation with Dignity

Spector says modern-day Mayans are exactly that — modern. While practicing some primitive ways, they are not primitive.

What Spector found in Puerto Rico was a people both separate and distinct from modern society. There was the air strip, and the commission of seven representatives who spoke fluent Spanish, and the four "promoters of health" who ran the clinic.

The refugees had a strong sense of cooperation. When tools were flown in, they were put directly into a communal tool shed.

Most impressive to Spector, though, were the people themselves. He says they were not bitter about what the Guatemalan government had done and continues to do to them. They accept the fate that has befallen them — "we are not guerrillas," they say, "guerrillas stay and fight" — but they are eager to pick up the pieces and begin again. Spector calls it "resignation with dignity."

Slide shows, film slated for tonight

Two slide shows and a film about Mayan Indians from Guatemala will be shown at the Wesley Center, 1236 Kincaid Street, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Native Guatemalan textiles will be on display as well.

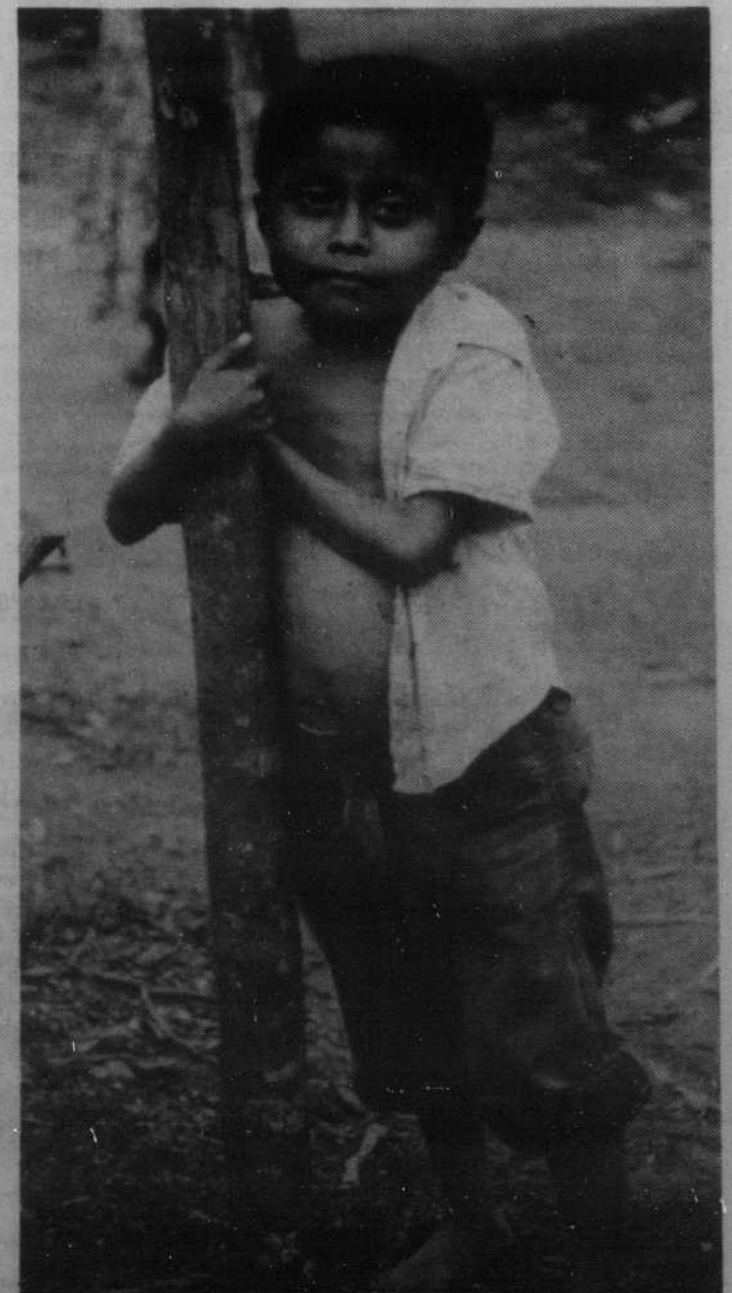
The film, "Adios Guatemala," was taken in one of the refugee camps in Mexico this Spring, and was produced by a group in San Cristobel Cargua. Tonight's showing of the film, which runs for 22 minutes, will be its Eugene premiere.

A slide show produced by Dave Beers on Guatemalan refugee camps in Mexico will be presented by Ron Spector, a Canadian herbalist who spent this past March and April visiting the camps in the Chiapas region.

The photographs for the second slide show, which considers the daily life of Guatemalan Indians, were taken in 1975.

The event is sponsored by the Guatemalan Refugee Alliance Consciously Involved in Action and Service.

The event is free, but donations will be accepted, says GRACIAS spokesperson Mitzi Linn.



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