

July 18, 1980

THE CUBAN REFUGEE PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE, 1959-1980

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, April 3, 1980, six Cubans crashed through the gate of the Peruvian Embassy in Havana seeking political asylum. During the incident a Cuban policeman guarding the compound was killed, and the Castro government removed the remainder of the guard in presumed retaliation. Within forty-eight hours, over ten thousand Cubans had sought asylum in the unprotected embassy, and perhaps as many as 100,000 had congregated in areas adjacent to the site, hoping to find means to enter. Thus began a new Cuban exodus.

On April 23, Fidel Castro opened the door to a migration of unprecedented proportions when, in a reversal of his long-held policy, he declared that all Cubans who wished to leave the island -- not just those within the Peruvian Embassy compound -- could do so. When he abruptly cancelled the transportation arrangements agreed upon (an airlift via Costa Rica), Cuban exiles in Florida formed a spontaneous boat-lift. By June 20, 114,462 Cubans had been brought to Key West on conveyances ranging from shrimp vessels to small pleasure boats.

President Carter's policy toward these events has undergone several changes. Initially reluctant to take any refugees at all, the Administration subsequently established a quota of 3,500. As the boat-lift began, it declared the transporting of Cubans to be illegal and began selectively impounding boats. On May 5, in what appeared to be a change in policy, President Carter announced that the U.S. would provide "an open heart and open arms" to the Cubans. The boat seizures, however, continued.

On May 14, the President ordered the Coast Guard to form a cordon around Florida waters to prevent additional boats from heading to Cuba and threatened to impose severe fines on boats

illegally transporting refugees. In conjunction with this, he expressed willingness in principle to establish an orderly airlift for Cubans allowed to leave the island in the future.

President Carter's orders effectively brought the transportation of refugees to an end. By late May, only a few dozen boats remained in Mariel, the port of exodus for the emigrants, and by mid-June, the arrival of new boatloads of refugees on U.S. shores had effectively stopped. As no progress has been made in establishing an official airlift, it appears that the flood of new refugees has, at least for the present, come to an end.

For Americans, the new Cuban exodus has posed difficult questions. Occurring shortly after the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees (who even now continue to arrive at the rate of 160,000 a year), coinciding with an increase in the number of Haitians seeking refuge on our shores, and coming at a time of deepening economic recession, it has caused many Americans to reevaluate the historic role of the U.S. as sanctuary for the needy and politically oppressed.

This paper does not attempt to analyze the moral problems raised by the Cuban migration, but instead to provide factual information relevant to the formation of policy on the subject. While the final decision on a refugee policy is ultimately subjective, certain practical considerations play an important role.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CUBAN REFUGEE PROBLEM

The most fundamental point to be considered is the extent to which the new refugees, on whose behalf hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars are spent, will ultimately make a significant contribution to our society. While it is impossible to look into the future, a good indicator of what might be expected exists in the development of the Cuban exile community which has formed in the U.S. over the past twenty years.

Since 1959, Cubans have been engaged in one of the most significant migrations, proportionally, in modern times. Over eight percent of the island's population has gone into exile, with around 700,000 coming to the U.S. prior to 1980 in several phases.

Between January 1, 1959 and the October 22, 1962 Missile Crisis, 248,070 migrated to the United States. In early 1959, members of the political and military elite fled, followed by members of the propertied and professional sectors, who by 1961 comprised 45 percent of the registrants with the Cuban Refugee Program. It soon became far more than an exodus of the elite, for by the end of the first phase, over 50 percent of the Refugee Program registrants were clerical and sales workers and skilled workers. This period also saw the arrival of some 13,000 unaccompanied children sent to the U.S. by parents fearful of government control of their lives.

When Cuba barred entry to the U.S. after the Missile Crisis, direct emigration was limited to such exceptional cases as the Bay of Pigs POWs and their families, and certain American citizens. In consequence, illegal escape became an important outlet. A large percentage of the 55,916 Cubans departing between 1962 and 1965 escaped by means of dangerous boat journeys, with the remainder flying initially to Mexico or Spain in the hope of later gaining admission to the U.S. The deterioration of conditions in Cuba was reflected in the background of the immigrants who came during this period: by 1963, a majority of those facing the hazards of illegal boat trips to the Florida Keys were peasants and laborers.

In 1965, legal emigration from Cuba was reestablished with the Freedom Flights airlift to Miami, which during its six years of existence brought to the U.S. 297,318 relatives of existing exiles. After its end, Cuban migration patterns reverted to those of the post-1962 lull, with Spain and Mexico again becoming the principal avenues of departure for refugees on their way to the United States. Because of a change in U.S. law subjecting them to immigration quota limitations, however, the number arriving in this country was small in relation to the earlier migration. In 1978 a new kind of exile began leaving Cuba -- political prisoners being allowed to depart by Fidel Castro. In all, between 1973 and the end of 1978, 50,357 additional Cubans entered the United States.

THE U.S. RESPONSE TO CUBAN REFUGEES, 1960-1980

By late 1960 over 100,000 refugees had arrived in Miami, and continued pouring in at the rate of 1,700 a week. Such assistance as had been given to prior arrivals, who because of Cuban rules forbidding their removal of assets from the island had no means of supporting themselves, derived from private sources. On December 2 of that year, the U.S. government became officially involved with the creation of the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center. The \$4 million initially budgeted for the program sustained a staff of fourteen, which eventually grew to a high of 328.

During its first six months, the program was financed through the President's Contingency Fund under the Mutual Security Act of 1954. The following year, the President's Contingency Fund under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 provided \$38.5 million. Thereafter, until 1980, funds were specifically appropriated by Congress annually under the Migration and Refugees Assistance Act adopted in 1962.

A new statutory base for the program was recently created with the passage of P.L. 96-212, the Refugee Act of 1980, as a result of which all U.S. refugee programs have come under a policy and management network headed by the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs. The Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services have assumed primary responsibility,

respectively, for the international and domestic aspects of refugee concerns. In addition, the new law makes changes in the funding of refugee programs, gradually eliminating the full federal reimbursement for cash and medical assistance which states have heretofore enjoyed.

Then Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Abraham Ribicoff announced a comprehensive nine-point program on February 3, 1961. Its objects included providing funds for refugee resettlement, financial assistance to meet the basic maintenance requirements of the refugees, providing essential health services, assisting in the establishment of language and skill training courses, distributing surplus food, and making financial assistance available for the care of unaccompanied children.

The program thus emphasized providing for the Cubans' immediate needs and finding them employment as quickly as possible. In conjunction with this, the government carried out a large-scale relocation program, finding positions around the country for those Cubans who were unable to find work in Miami's glutted labor market. By 1980, a total of 301,732 refugees, or three out of every five registering with the Center, had been moved out of Miami under this program.

A difficult problem confronted by the Refugee Center was that of unaccompanied children arriving in increasing numbers during the Sixties. Between 13,000 and 15,000 arrived altogether, and although most went to live with friends or relatives, thousands were homeless. On February 21, 1961, the Unaccompanied Cuban Refugee Children's Program was created to place these arrivals in foster homes. Statistics compiled in 1967 indicate that as of that year 8,331 children had been cared for through the program, with the peak occurring in October 1962, when 4,100 children were receiving foster care. The problem, however, proved to be only temporary, for the parents of most eventually found means to escape from Cuba. Thus, by 1965 only 1,448 children remained in the program, and two years later the number had been further reduced to 375.

OVERCOMING EDUCATION TROUBLES

The new arrivals in Miami faced significant hurdles in finding employment. There was an obvious language barrier, and many had skills which could not be readily transferred to the American economy. Others lacked the American educational degrees or state licenses necessary for them to carry out their previous occupation. In this regard, professionals were especially hard hit; most found that their foreign university training received virtually no recognition in the United States. Their problems were compounded by the requirement of at least half the states that lawyers, medical professionals, architects and public school teachers hold citizenship in order to practice.

Attempts were made to address this problem. One had its beginning in Iowa in 1961, when a need to increase the number of Spanish teachers made officials seek a formula whereby the Cuban arrivals could be employed. By this time, a substantial talent pool existed comprised of both experienced teachers and highly educated lawyers and other professionals who could carry out classroom functions. Under the law, however, all needed three years of coursework to earn a state teaching license.

A program was created under which the candidates chosen received a temporary teaching certificate after a year's intensive training, following which they took the balance of coursework needed for a permanent certificate over the ensuing three years, while also working full time. A loan of \$1,000 per student was made available. According to a pamphlet published by the Refugee Program:

Since most of the Cubans were middle-aged and had children to support, even with the help of the loan many of them had to supplement their incomes by taking part-time jobs. Nevertheless, they were undaunted either by the hard work ahead or by the prospect of Iowa winters which, to people who have never lived¹ in a cold climate, seemed quite formidable.

By the fall of 1964, Cuban teachers were working in 38 Iowa counties. Seeing the potential of this program, Indiana established a similar project involving 53 Cuban teacher trainees. At about the same time, a program with similar objectives was established in Miami itself, where officials "who had at first been concerned that an influx of Cubans might create an unemployment problem, were fast becoming even more² concerned about the draining of Cuban talent from the Miami area." Seven programs were in operation at the peak period of 1967, and in virtually all regions of the country there was at least one institution of higher learning at which Cuban refugees were being trained and recruited for teaching jobs.

In 1968, 169 Cubans who had participated in the early training programs provided follow-up information on their development. The information indicated that all but six percent had remained in the teaching profession, and that ninety percent had obtained permanent teaching certificates or licenses to teach.

By 1961, there were nearly 700 exiled Cuban physicians in the U.S. who, because of state licensing requirements affecting

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1. Professional Manpower: A New Way to Meet the Need, U.S. Cuban Refugee Program, Social Rehabilitation Service, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, p. 2.
 2. Ibid. p. 3.

foreigners not trained in the U.S., found themselves, as one expressed it, "free to do almost anything except practice medicine."³ Their first hurdle was to pass the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates Examination; and because of the need in the U.S. for qualified physicians, a three-month refresher course was established at the University of Miami that year combining English training with a subject matter review. In conjunction with this, a loan fund was established which lent 266 Cuban physicians \$137,500 while in operation. These semi-annual courses, which by 1967 had assisted 2,393 Cubans, have now become a permanent addition to the University of Miami curriculum.

The refresher courses have made an additional contribution not foreseen at the time of their creation. As early as 1965, a substantial number of non-Cuban doctors began to enroll; by 1977, 2117 doctors, representing forty-one, primarily Spanish-speaking, nations of the world, had attended. Some of these graduates are now among the leading physicians in their countries, both in the academic field and that of practical medicine.

OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE PROGRAM

By early 1980, a total of 486,000 Cubans had registered with the refugee program, 153,534 of them during the first year and a half of operations (it should be noted that about twenty-five percent of the exiles did not turn to the government for assistance at any point). Total costs for the program have come to just under \$1.5 billion. Refugee assistance peaked in 1973, when the program spent \$143.7 million. The budget then declined annually, and, prior to the Mariel exodus, it had been estimated that fiscal year 1981 needs would be for no more than \$45 million.

THE CUBAN SUCCESS STORY

The development of the Cuban exile community since the early days of dependence on government assistance is generally regarded as a success story with good reason. Bank presidents and wealthy businessmen have evolved from immigrants owning nothing but the clothes on their backs, and refugees who started at the very bottom of a particular occupation have frequently risen to the top through dedication and hard work.

Like members of national groups who migrated to the U.S. in previous decades, Cubans were imbued with a high degree of motivation. According to sociologist Dr. Juan Clark, their intense determination is not totally coincidental. "It would have been

3. Rafael A. Penalver, "Post Graduate Program for Cuban Refugee Physicians," The Journal of the Florida Medical Association, Historical Issue, "Medicine and the Cuban Physician" (Vol. 64, No. 8), August 1977, p. 551.

difficult for them to leave the island...without such a motivation that enabled them to overcome the harsh deterrents imposed by the regime."⁴

The most dramatic indication of the prosperity Cubans have achieved over only twenty years is the fact that there are now approximately two hundred millionaires within the Cuban community in Miami, the city with the largest Cuban population. Other statistics reveal the solid, if less spectacular, affluence which the average Cuban has attained. By 1970, it could be reported that "44% of Cubans in Miami own their own homes; 90% of the families possess at least one automobile; 37%, two or more; radios and televisions are in practically all homes; and 60% have air conditioning. At least 25% of the Cuban families travel during their vacations, either within the United States or to a foreign land."⁵ Four years later, the number of Cubans owning their own homes had risen to seventy percent.

The income of Cubans in Miami, while not yet up to the level of the American whites, has risen substantially. The 1967 median family income for Miami Cubans of \$5,244 rose a dramatic thirty-seven percent to \$7,200 by 1970. In 1977, it had risen to \$14,000, and two years later, it had reached a high of \$15,300. Sixty-nine percent of families earned over \$12,000 and twenty-four percent over \$15,000.

The 1977 earning power of Cubans was contrasted with that of other Hispanics and of the population at large by Morris J. Newman, a Department of Labor statistician, in a 1978 study. At that time, the median income for all U.S. families was \$16,009, while that for Cubans was \$14,000. Mexicans followed with \$12,000; blacks were next with an income of \$9,563; and Puerto Ricans earned \$7,972. The per capita income for Cubans, moreover, is closer to the average per capita income for all Americans than the figures indicate, since for statistical purposes the Cuban family is considered to include 3.6 members, but the white American family 2.5 members.

Newman also analyzed Cuban employment patterns, finding that their employment record now comes close to matching that of all Americans, and far outdistances those of other Hispanic groups in the U.S.

At a time when the jobless rate for all white workers in the U.S. was 6.2 percent, that for black workers 13.1 percent, and for the total Hispanic population 10.1 percent, that for the Cubans was 8.8 percent. Part of this, moreover, may be due to

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4. Juan M. Clark, "Why? The Cuban Exodus," Union of Cubans in Exile, 1977, p. 27.
 5. Harvey Rosenhouse, "The Exodus and Success of Cubans," Vision (Vol. 38, No. 5), March 13, 1970 (page 2 of reprint).

the Cubans' unusually high participation in the labor force; their 64.1 percent participation is actually slightly higher than the 62.3 percent participation among the overall working-age U.S. population.

Statistics for 1978 and 1979 continue to bear out the pattern of unemployment. In 1978, unemployment for American-born whites in Miami was 5.8 percent, for blacks 10.2 percent and for Hispanics 6.2 percent; in 1979 4.9 percent of the whites, 9.3 percent of the blacks and 5.2 percent of the Hispanics were unemployed.

In examining the employment of Hispanics by occupation, Newman found a pattern recurring. The participation of Cubans in the higher paid professions requiring more training fell slightly behind the U.S. average, but was substantially ahead of that of other Hispanic groups. Indeed, the likelihood of a Cuban holding a position from the "professional or technical" category was about forty percent higher than for the average Hispanic. The probability of his holding a managerial position was even higher.

That the Cubans have reached their current economic level is impressive considering the large numbers who never totally overcame their initial barriers of language and their lack of educational credentials which would be officially recognized in the United States. A study conducted in 1974 indicated that 41.93 percent of the college graduates sampled were working as sales persons. By comparison, almost the same percentage of individuals with a high school education (50 percent) held jobs in that category. Of the college graduates, only 16.12 percent held professional positions, and 12.9 percent were employed as elementary and high school teachers. In spite of the programs providing for English training, 55 percent of the respondents felt they did not have sufficient knowledge of the English language, and 25 percent felt they did not have a better job because of their lack of English.

The greatest waste of human capital occurred in the category of middle-aged professionals who, because of families to support, found it impossible to leave the job market for the years of study required to earn a U.S. license to practice their former careers. This age group was also the one with the greatest difficulty in overcoming the language barrier, given the inverse relationship between age and ability to learn a new language.

The success which Cubans have attained overall is worth reviewing in some detail. In 1967, Miami Cubans owned 919 businesses; this number had increased to 8,000 in 1976 and to 18,000 by 1980. In 1978, it was reported that they ran 230 Latino restaurants, thirty furniture factories, twenty garment plants, a shoe factory employing 3,000 and about 30 transplanted cigar factories. Cubans currently also own over sixty car dealerships, more than 500 supermarkets, over 250 drugstores, and they now own or operate eighty percent of all service stations in the Miami area.

By 1971, Cubans were putting up about thirty percent of all the construction in the city, including a \$35 million, 40-story office building designed to be the tallest structure in Florida. Cubans now make up seventy-five percent of all construction workers as well, an increase of fifteen percent in the last two years alone.

One area in which the success of Cubans has been conspicuous is banking. By 1978, they controlled 14 of 67 local commercial banks; one of these, the Continental National, saw its 1974 level of \$2 million in deposits grow to \$29 million within four years. In 1971, there were three bank presidents, twenty-one vice presidents and five hundred officers of Cuban origin; by 1980, the number of bank presidents alone had grown to sixteen.

The pattern of success has been repeated in other parts of the country. In 1971, it was estimated that of the almost 5,000 Cubans living in Atlanta, Georgia, about one hundred were in various businesses, and about fifty percent of the adults held positions as college or university professors, doctors, engineers, accountants or business executives. By that time, some 3,000 Cubans taught in colleges and universities around the country.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

Cuban doctors as a group have been particularly successful, and because they arrived in this country at the time of an increasing shortage of physicians, their contribution takes on a special dimension. Many are now employed throughout the country providing care to individuals who would otherwise have been unassisted. An example of this occurred in Milledgeville State Hospital, where Cubans at one time made up sixty percent of the resident physicians. In 1971, sixty-eight percent of the 113 doctors on the staff were Cubans, as were five of the ten directors, each of whom headed units with seven hundred to a thousand patients. Cuban Refugee Program Director Howard Palmatier declared at the time, "This hospital would not be open today were it not for the services of Cuban physicians. I dread to think of the many hundreds of citizens who would be without medical attention in that situation."⁶

In 1971, U.S. News and World Report reported that whole hospitals were staffed by Cuban doctors, citing as a prime example the three hundred bed Pan-American Hospital in Miami. By 1973, Cubans ran about a dozen private clinics in Miami alone, a number which stood at fifteen by the end of the decade. At present there are estimated to be 3,500 practicing Cuban physicians in Miami alone, with up to another 2,000 Cubans being in the process

6. Penalver, pp. 551-552.

7. "Flight from Cuba -- Castro's Loss is U.S. Gain," U.S. News & World Report, May 31, 1971, p. 74.

of preparing for the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates Examination or going through medical school.

In October 1960, eighty-seven Cuban doctors founded the Cuban Medical Association in Exile, which received the official recognition of the AMA the following year. By 1977, the 3,070-member association was officially recognized by medical associations throughout Latin America, and by schools of medicine, research centers and governments both in the United States and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

While the contribution of Cuban physicians in saving lives cannot be tabulated in dollars and cents, it is possible to measure the savings to Americans in medical training costs. Dr. Juan Clark did this in the early seventies, at a time when he estimated there were 3,100 practicing Cuban physicians in the United States. "Bearing in mind that the cost of medical school, exclusive of previous education, ranges between \$64,000 and \$104,000 for a four-year course, the contribution to this country by this group of Cubans could be estimated conservatively between \$198.4 to \$322.4 million."⁸

Many of the Cuban doctors, moreover, have distinguished themselves within their profession. According to Dr. Emanuel M. Papper, Dean of the University of Miami School of Medicine, the graduates of the refresher course, "not content with attaining minimum licensure requirements, have continued their studies and training. All American medical specialty boards now number Cubans among their members. Cuban physicians appear as authors in the best medical journals and as lecturers at almost every medical meeting of the last ten years."⁹

WELFARE AND THE CUBAN COMMUNITY

As might be inferred from the facts outlined thus far, Cubans have relied on their own labor for sustenance, and few have depended on government assistance for any length of time. While in 1963, forty-five percent of Cubans were receiving government aid, this situation changed quickly. Two years later, Howard Palmatier reported that less than five percent of the resettled refugees ever required welfare assistance, and then only for short periods of time. In Miami itself, the caseload had been reduced by 1965 to 8,000 cases involving 14,000 people, many of them aged, physically handicapped, or women with young children. It also included some 1,500 cases of men who with basic training in English and job skills could be expected

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8. Juan M. Clark, The Exodus from Revolutionary Cuba (1959-1974): A Sociological Analysis, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Florida, 1975, p. 143.
 9. Penalver, p. 553.

soon to leave the rolls. By 1979, it was reported that eighty percent of the Cubans who remained on the rolls were over sixty years of age.

Relatively few cases of Cubans becoming chronically dependent on government assistance have been reported and, as a 1964 program proved, remedial steps tend to be highly effective. As the stream of refugees slowed down, the Refugee Center developed a program focusing on 3,800 unskilled female heads of households who subsisted in the Miami slums on a \$100 monthly government payment.

Under "Training for Independence," subsequent receipt of these women's welfare checks was made contingent on their attending job training sessions, usually in the operation of power sewing machines. Child care services were provided for the women's dependents. Of the 3,800 women asked to take part, about three-fourths did so, and about eighty percent of those enrolled in the first courses found steady work immediately after finishing training. A Cuban Refugee Program pamphlet describes the continuing success of the program: "Whereas in mid-1964, when the project was launched and when there were 3,800 female heads of families who were dependent upon public assistance, in January, 1968, after new arrivals had been coming in at the rate of 200 a day for almost two years, only 341 female heads of families were receiving public assistance. A few have prospects for resettlement or jobs....Some will no doubt be enrolled later; most will be found to have other plans which makes enrollment unnecessary."¹⁰

In 1971, David Caveda, a Cuban leader and manufacturers' representative in Columbus, Ohio, summed up his countrymen's philosophy toward government assistance, "I know of only three Cuban families on welfare, all of them aged. There are no able-bodied Cubans on welfare. We belong to a society where people take care of one another. There is a pattern -- the ones established here help the newcomers."¹¹

Comprehensive statistics on criminality by Cubans are not available, but such information as exists indicates that Cubans have not created a social problem in this regard. In 1971, Miami Police Chief Bernard Garmire told Business Week that Cubans accounted for only five or six percent of the crime in the city, although composing thirty percent of the population. On the same point, Howard Palmatier stated, "I've had an opportunity to speak with civic leaders, with church leaders, and by and large they have only good things to say about the refugees -- that they are

10. "Training for Independence: A New Approach to the Problems of Dependency," U.S. Cuban Refugee Program, Social and Rehabilitation Service, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, p. 18.

11. "Flight from Cuba - Castro's Loss is U.S. Gain," p. 76.

ambitious, have strong family ties, and do not show up as crime statistics, something of which we are especially proud."¹²

Interviewed in 1973 by the National Geographic, Chief Garmire indicated that the Cubans' record remained good. As Cubans made up a third of the city's population, "in theory, they should produce about a third of our crime. Yet they account for only ten to twelve percent of criminal arrests. Much of the crime in Little Havana¹³ is committed by outsiders who come in and victimize the Cubans."

According to Officer Robert Rogers Yee, also interviewed by National Geographic, "[T]he ones in their twenties and thirties or older, they're very law abiding, very respectful of the uniform. No Cuban has ever called me 'pig' or 'fuzz.' I've had them come up and say, 'Anything I can do to help, you can depend on me.' And they really mean it."¹⁴ I think many of them would risk their lives for a policeman."

This respect for the law is similarly reflected in the conduct of young people in school. According to Juan Clark, "[T]he crime rate among the young Cubans appears to be disproportionately inferior to their corresponding percentages within the total population. Thus the proportion of Spanish youngsters involved in school-related crimes constituted only seven percent of the total offender population in 1975 when this ethnic group represented more than thirty percent of the entire school body."¹⁵

It was reported in 1970 that "the only aspect in which the Cubans are worse than the native Miami population is in that pertaining to traffic violations. An aggressive driving style and a tendency to abuse the use of the horn tends to make Cubans receive a substantial amount of fines. But even this is improving."¹⁶

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The performance of Cuban children in school has generally been above average, a fact which Juan Clark attributes to the values promoted in their home environment. "The high motivation of the elders is reflected on the young by the desire, within these, to achieve the highest possible level of education. Thus,

12. "How the Immigrants Made It," Business Week, May 1, 1979 (page 2 of reprint).

13. Edward J. Linehan, "Cuba's Exiles Bring New Life to Miami," National Geographic, July, 1973, p. 80.

14. Ibid., p. 81.

15. Clark, "Why? The Cuban Exodus," p. 31.

16. Rosenhouse, p. 3.

the high proportion of young Cubans attending colleges and universities is noticeable, not only in Florida, but also in other universities."¹⁷

The initial concern among Miamians that the wave of refugee children would lower the educational standards of Dade County proved groundless. It was found that within 1.5 years children became more proficient in English, and in 1971 Paul W. Bell, executive director of instruction for the county's school system, declared, "By and large, Cuban kids have had more of a positive than a negative impact. The concern of many that academic standards would drop drastically because the Cubans didn't speak English never materialized."¹⁸

By early 1980 Hispanic youngsters made up a third of Dade County's pupil population, and according to a report issued two years earlier, "they score well above other Dade students on English and math achievement tests."¹⁹

According to 1976 statistics, seventy-two percent of Cuban high school graduates went on to college. By 1971, 12,800 loans had been given to Cuban college students, and, reported U.S. News & World Report, "Congress recently heard testimony that of (these) loans...only 147 were delinquent -- a performance which outstrips the national average."²⁰

According to statistics, moreover, Cubans placed less of a burden on the public school system than was originally expected. They have a greater tendency to send their children to private schools, and by the late Seventies they had started about thirty of their own.

Many Cuban students have excelled in scholastics or school athletics. In 1979, it was reported that "[e]ven the most obstinate natives of Miami are proud of Carlos Alvarez, a University of Florida football player who occupies a prominent place in the North American sports scene. Many other Cuban high school boys are football stars. The most outstanding Florida student last year was Rafael Penalver, a Cuban. And the student who received the honor of addressing the Catholic University of Washington, D.C., at the end of the year was also a Cuban."²¹

IMPACT ON MIAMI

As early as 1962, the Saturday Evening Post voiced a concern in relation to the first wave of Cubans that is being repeated

17. Clark, "Why? The Cuban Exodus," p. 27.

18. "How the Immigrants Made It," p. 2.

19. "Hispanic Americans, Soon: The Biggest Minority," Time, October 16, 1978, p. 51.

20. "Flight from Cuba -- Castro's Loss Is U.S. Gain," p. 77.

21. Rosenhouse, p. 2.

now with regard to the 1980 exiles. It worried that "Miami is a tourist center, and its economy is unable to accommodate the heavy flow of refugees. Of the 75,000 in the Miami area, about 27,000 (...with dependents it would come to 54,000) are unemployed."²²

Because of current concerns that the 1980 exiles will place an intolerable strain on Miami's job market and the resources of the Florida government -- and that they will become one more burden on the shoulders of hard-pressed American taxpayers -- it is important to analyze the effect Cubans have had on the city of Miami.

Exactly how many Cubans live there, no one knows. Some experts place the figure as of late 1979 as high as 550,000 and even 600,000. Cubans make up an estimated 85 percent of Dade County's Hispanic population, which in turn comprises at least 40 percent of the country's total population.

Analysts agree that, far from placing a permanent burden on the city, this large bloc of newcomers has transformed its economic structure in the process of improving its own collective fortune. Before 1959, Miami's sluggish economy was almost totally dependent on the tourist trade, with its volatile ups and downs, and its lopsided seasonal cycles. In the past twenty years tourism has been strengthened further and expanded to a year-round business, and important new sources of employment and revenue have come into being. An unprecedented prosperity has been created in Miami as a direct result of its transformation, by virtue of the very presence of the Cubans, into what has been termed "the new capital city of Latin America."

Attracted by the Hispanic atmosphere of the city, Latin American tourists flock to Miami in increasing numbers. By 1978, over 5 million came annually, and this number has continued to grow at a current rate of 15 percent a year. The contribution of these tourists to the economy, moreover, is higher than that of American visitors, for in 1978 it was estimated that the average Latin tourist spent about \$1,000, while U.S. and Canadian visitors only spent \$408. Unlike Americans, furthermore, Latins are undeterred by Miami's hot, humid summers, and come all year round.

The wealthier Latins are giving an additional boost to the economy by investing in real estate. In 1978 the president of the largest real estate firm in the South estimated that sixty percent of the luxury condominiums on Brickell Avenue in Key Biscayne, and about thirty percent of those on Miami Beach were being bought by Latins. By 1980, their annual investment in this field probably amounts to over \$1 billion annually.

22. "Our Refugees from Castroland," Saturday Evening Post, June 16, 1962.

The "Latinization" of Miami has spurred and diversified its economy in other ways as well. Banking is a dramatic example. International banking has evolved from a modest business to one of such magnitude that by 1978 only New York had more banks specializing in international transactions. Currently, fifteen foreign banks have branches in the city, and another fifteen local banks (an increase of four over the last two years) provide facilities similar to those offered by foreign banks under the Edge Act.

Gradually Miami has become a seat for international corporations as well. By 1971, 33 American companies had set up their Latin American trade headquarters in the Miami suburb of Coral Gables. Seven years later, this number had grown to 76, and by 1980, 90 multinational corporations had opened their Latin American headquarters in Miami. According to the Washington Post:

Most of the firms made the move after considering a half dozen or more Latin American cities. Coral Gables, for instance, beat out Mexico City, Bogota, Caracas, San Juan, Buenos Aires, Sao Paolo and Rio when E.I. du Pont de Nemours was picking a new Latin headquarters last year....The company decided it was simply faster to telephone, fly and mail to South America from Miami than from any South American country."²³

In all, international trade generated \$4 billion in state income by 1978, and has led to the creation of 167,000 jobs.

In an interview with columnist Joseph Kraft, Florida governor Bob Graham summed up the effect Cubans have had in turning Miami into an international business center. "I was born in Miami in 1936, and I grew up in Miami, and I remember that the city slogan was 'Gateway to South America.' In fact we were the gateway for South Georgia. But the advent of the Cuban refugees made the slogan a reality."²⁴

The presence of Cubans has diversified and expanded the economy of Miami in other ways as well. 25,000 Cuban workers form the backbone for a garment industry which has grown to be the third largest in the United States. South Florida agriculture has also been effected by the advent of Cubans, according to Juan Clark:

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- 23. Bill Peterson, "Miami: Cuba's Uprooted Elite Creating a New Latin Capital," Washington Post, December 3, 1978, p. A21.
 - 24. Joseph Kraft, "New Status for Refugee-Swollen Florida," Los Angeles Times, May 14, 1980.

As the Cuban population increased, a great demand for their typical staples such as yucca, boniato...and malanga developed.... Eventually Cuban farmers began to cultivate them, and hundreds of acres have been planted, resulting in the possibility of exporting these products now. The sugar industry has been the one gaining the most with the expertise in this field introduced by the refugees. Hundreds of Cubans have significantly contributed to this industry. Most of the sugar mills in the South Florida area...are practically run by Cubans. The cattle sector has also been influenced in the same form, but at a lesser magnitude.²⁵

Some statistics demonstrated in a specially dramatic way the increase of capital in Miami. For example, the total assets of savings and loans came to just under \$3 million in 1970. Eight years later, this had increased to over \$12.6 billion. Statistics from commercial banks tell a similar story: their deposits grew during the same eight-year period from \$3.2 billion to \$7 billion.

Miami has benefited from the presence of Cubans in other ways as well. One example is the unofficial "urban renewal" program which this group has carried out. In 1960, the center of Miami was "submerged in economic decadence" and its buildings "deteriorating rapidly."²⁶ Cubans began concentrating in a "decaying residential section close to Downtown Miami" which later came to be known as Little Havana, and which had the advantage of being a low rental area with many closed stores. Juan Clark states:

Cubans took advantage of the (closed stores) and gradually began to settle here while the Anglo population was moving further away into the suburbs. An informal urban renewal program began to take place along Eighth Street and its vicinity as Cubans developed roots, by improving and remodeling the house they were gradually purchasing. Eventually, the exiles began moving into Hialeah, Westchester and other suburban areas while Little Havana gained more population from the new arrivals. Further uplifting actually occurred here through the replacement of many of the old housing units by brand new ones....²⁷

25. Clark, "Why? The Cuban Exodus," p. 29.

26. Rosenhouse, p. 2.

27. Clark, "Why? The Cuban Exodus," pp. 29-30.

By 1980, the Christian Science Monitor stated flatly, "There are no Cuban slums."²⁸

ROLE IN POLITICS

As the status of Cubans shifted from that of presumably temporary exiles in the U.S. to that of permanent inhabitants, their attitude toward this country has changed accordingly. An increasing number is adopting American citizenship, and becoming involved in the political process as well. While in 1970 only 10 percent of the Cubans in Miami were American citizens, by 1980 177,000 were citizens and an additional 320,000 had become permanent resident aliens, a preliminary step to citizenship. In a recent survey of non-citizens, furthermore, 86.4 percent indicated they intended to become citizens. Their participation in elections, moreover, is an unusually high 70 percent of registered voters. Already the mayor of Miami, Maurice Ferre, is a Latin, the chairman of the State Democratic Party and two city council members of the Miami suburb of Hialeah are Cubans, and the number of Cuban elected officials is expected to increase sharply over the next decade.

Cubans are taking an increasingly prominent role in civic causes. Their interest grew slowly at first for several reasons. Most importantly, they initially regarded their stay in the U.S. as temporary, and saw themselves as visitors in the community rather than members. At the same time, during the difficult transition of their first years in exile, their efforts were too absorbed in financing the necessities of life to make it possible for them to contribute either time or money to civic activities.

In the last decade, this has changed substantially. Cubans are heavily involved in such fund-raising organizations as the Heart Fund, the March of Dimes, United Fund and Boy and Girl Scouts. They have enriched the cultural life of the city by the establishment of a light opera company, two ballet companies, six theaters and many libraries and art galleries.

When the new wave of exiles arrived in Key West, Cubans were the first to help, contributing over \$2 million in food and clothing alone within the first month. They contributed thousands of hours in services, providing the new exiles with health and legal services, and helping them with the red tape of the immigration process. In response to this massive mobilization of assistance, a White House aide declared, "I don't know of any other community in the country that has the resources, the motivation and the organization to do what the Cuban-Americans did."²⁹

28. Geoffrey Godsell, "The Cubans," Christian Science Monitor, April 30, 1980, p. 12.

29. Kraft, "New Status for Refugee-Swollen Florida."

The population of the Miama area has almost doubled in the last twenty years from its 1960 base of one million people, and its civilian labor force has increased from 408,300 to 721,455 as of March 1980. Significantly, the creation of jobs has roughly kept pace. In 1960 there were 381,000 jobs being filled; this had grown to 639,800 by 1978, at a time when there was a labor force of 688,000.

Even if the Latin atmosphere brought to Miami by the Cubans had not attracted outside capital, it is inevitable that their presence in and of itself would have created jobs. Meeting the consumer needs of hundreds of thousands of new residents necessarily causes the economy to expand -- and this in turn creates jobs for those new residents.

In the specific case of the Cubans, having a language and a cultural orientation different from that of Americans, it was almost inevitable that a complex infra-structure, creating thousands of jobs, should develop to provide the community with goods and services carrying a distinct ethnic flavor. The hundreds of restaurants and grocery stores specializing in Cuban foods, and the flourishing Spanish language communications media (one television station, six radio stations, and many newspapers) are only two examples.

An economic structure has evolved covering all phases of human activity, and at least theoretically allowing a person to live out his whole life without going outside the Cuban community. A child could be brought into the world by a Cuban doctor in a Cuban-owned clinic, receive his education in a Cuban-run school, spend his adult life working in a Cuban enterprise -- and be buried by a Cuban funeral home.

The size of this self-contained structure is hard to estimate, but an idea of its scope can be gathered from a recent survey which indicated that 33.6 percent of Cubans speak only Spanish at work, and an additional 22.6 percent speak "mostly" Spanish. While it can be argued that none of this activity is of any special benefit to American-born Miamians, it must be remembered that the tax revenues from the Cuban economic structure assist all residents of the city.

Substantial concern exists now about the burden which the 1980 Cuban exiles will place on Miami's economy. While the existence of an immediate strain, aggravated by the consequences of the recession afflicting the whole country, cannot be denied, there is every reason for long-term optimism. If the history of the past twenty years is any guide, the very presence of these new residents will create an expansion of the job market, and the labor force they create will attract yet new capital and new industries. The exiles of twenty years ago proved wrong the critics who feared that their presence would cause Miami's economy to collapse; there is every reason to think that this worry will once more be proved groundless.

THE TAX BURDEN

In assessing the development of the Cuban community, the single most controversial point is determining the exact extent to which its members have been an asset or a burden to this country. At a time when hard-pressed American taxpayers are being asked to provide funds for the assistance of a new wave of refugees, the question is an entirely legitimate one.

Many contributions by the Cubans on which it is difficult to place a price tag have already been discussed. One purely quantitative method of determining their financial contribution is by establishing the amount they have paid in taxes.

An absolute amount is difficult to establish, as no statistics are available on the specific point. Nevertheless, with such figures as exist a rough calculation can be made. Assuming a Cuban population in Miami of 400,000 (which is probably an undercount), and family income of \$14,000 for 1977, \$14,800 for 1978 and \$15,300 for 1979, and a federal income tax rate of twenty-five percent, federal income tax payments for those three years would be as follows: \$390 million for 1977; \$410 million for 1978; and \$425 million for 1979. The three figures total \$1.225 billion.

Even on the basis of what is probably a population undercount and a very modest tax base, and without the inclusion of other revenue generating factors such as real estate, sales and corporate taxes, new tourist dollars from abroad, or even the inclusion of the other 300,000 Cubans living in the United States, it is clear that in the last three years alone the Cubans living in Miami returned to the government almost the entire amount spent on their assistance of the whole community over the last twenty years. So while it is difficult to estimate the exact amount contributed by Cubans to the U.S. government, this rough calculation makes clear that the figure is quite high; Miami's Mayor Maurice Ferre has calculated, in fact, that the total amount is approximately five times higher than the total aid Cubans have received.

CONCLUSION

Concerns about the ability of the United States to absorb immigrants, and about the sheer desirability of admitting large numbers of foreign nationals in the country, are nothing new, and in fact predate the twentieth century. Yet the pattern established earlier of immigrants being absorbed into American society within a relatively short period of time seems to have held true in modern times as well.

The Indochinese migration in 1975 serves as a good example. When large numbers of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians first arrived, there was considerable worry about their becoming a burden. Yet within two years only eleven percent of refugee

families were totally dependent on welfare, and by 1978, 93.1 percent of the Indochinese in the labor force actually held jobs. Although close to 375,000 Indochinese refugees have arrived since 1975, and indeed continue to enter the U.S. at the rate of 14,000 per month, there have been no widespread reports of adjustment problems since the initial transition periods.

Americans' periodic surprise at the relatively easy assimilation of large numbers of immigrants may be due to their failure to understand the total immigration picture. While refugee waves that number in the hundreds of thousands receive widespread publicity, a far larger number of immigrants are quietly admitted to the country annually. In the ten-year period through the end of 1978 (the most current figures available), over four million foreign nationals came to the U.S. under this legal classification. If it is possible for our economy to absorb such large numbers of newcomers -- and this has manifestly been the case -- it is no wonder that much smaller groups who enter under a different legal classification are absorbed as well.

When Cuban refugees began arriving on U.S. shores in 1959, many Americans had concerns similar to those being expressed in 1980. There were worries about the ability of the American economy to absorb the newcomers, and about their taking jobs away from native Americans. General concerns existed about how they would adapt, and about how they would affect the general tenor of life in those areas where they congregated.

Experts agree that the worries were unnecessary. Cubans left the welfare rolls after an initial period of receiving modest government assistance, accepting willingly whatever jobs were available, and in many cases subsequently rose to the top of their occupational ladder. Their very presence has had the effect of creating jobs, especially in Miami, and the Latin flavor they brought to the city led to an unprecedented diversification of its economic base.

Measured by any standard, Cubans have contributed significantly to the United States and have proved to be good citizens. There is every reason to think that the pattern they established will be followed by their newly arrived fellow countrymen.

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