

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE FOR CUBA

Pulling The Devil's Tail

by Tom White
With Don Tanner

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**by Tom White
With Don Tanner**

Living Sacrifice Books
Bartlesville, OK

The Spiritual Battle for Cuba

English Edition

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Dedication

In the middle of the night a small group of Christians quickly and quietly let a man over a wall in a basket. We don't know their names, but if it weren't for these dedicated believers, perhaps the apostle Paul never would have made it to safety and much of the New Testament would not have been written. This book is dedicated to those who were holding the rope, and to those who hold the rope today for the persecuted church.

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Acknowledgments

This book is not fiction. All events occurred as written. Documents have been gathered from Reuter News, European newspapers, several news wire services, independent witnesses, delegations of pastors and professors visiting Cuba from other countries, eyewitness testimonies from the church members themselves, tape recorded reports and personal interviews.

A portion of this book contains facts sent out of Cuba by the Baptist Jesús Leyva Guerra—facts which have been confirmed by personal interviews, photographs and several news reports. In calling attention to the plight of the persecuted Christians, Brother Guerra troubled the waters by obeying Hebrews 13:3. As of this writing, he is being held in the Psychiatric Hospital Gustavo Machín in the Province of Santiago, Cuba, for his efforts.

Acknowledgments

A Special Thank You To:

Dr. Armando Valladarez

Rev. David Bontrager

Rev. Richard Wurmbrand

Rev. Cornelius Beachy and "family"

Mr. Jesús Leyva Guerra

Dr. Sharon Georgianna

Dr. Juan Clark

Rev. Florentino D. Toirac

Mr. Frank Calzon

Dr. Hans Braun

Mr. Diego Abich

Mr. José R. Cárdenas

My family—Ofelia, Dorothy, Daniel

My parents—Charles and Dorothy Shields

Troubling the Water

Fidel Castro thundered over the microphone, slamming his fist on the speaker's podium. "Today we say with more force than ever: socialism or death, Marxism-Leninism or death!"

In his televised New Year's speech from the balcony of the municipal building in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba, Castro declared his revolution a "beacon of light before the eyes of the world."

Before him an organized mass of two hundred thousand people thronged in forced celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Revolution.

Not many blocks away on Paseo de Marti stood a church whose lights had been smashed by followers of this green uniformed god of Cuba. A few months earlier Castro had tried to extinguish

the lights of other churches as well. Their glow flickered, but did not go out. This is their story.

Little has been published about the struggles of Christians in Cuba. Political and religious leaders in this Communist stronghold would have the West believe that religious persecution does not exist. In the following pages you will discover the true plight of the Cuban church.

Only active Christians and churches are persecuted. Those who cooperate with the state escape the iron fist. The mechanisms of oppression are not accidental or haphazard. They are carefully planned and executed by an aggressive, atheistic government. Attacks come in a variety of forms, ranging from spiritual isolation to the desecration and closure of church facilities and the physical abuse and imprisonment of believers. The book will show how virtually all segments of society participate in the harassment, including religious, educational and political leaders.

My goal is to motivate Christians in the Free World to pray for the persecuted believers in Cuba and to become involved in the evangelization of this island nation.

Why would someone write a book like this? Early in Jesus' ministry, our Lord visited the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem.¹ Crowds of sick and lame lay nearby, awaiting the moment when the angel of the Lord would "trouble the water." The first person to step into the pool would be healed.

¹John 5:1-4.

Jesus disturbed the waters of the Gergesenes,² causing dramatic spiritual and material changes. The manifestation of God's love and power produces varied reactions, positive and negative. The citizens there asked Jesus not to come back.

The church must ever be ready to stir up certain waters with Christ's message or cancers of apathy, materialism, atheism and lifeless religious practices will never be healed. My purpose in writing this book is to "trouble the water."

As you read this book, you will enter the troubled waters with different Christian groups in Cuba. You may not agree with some of their doctrines or practices. But as you step into this pool of suffering with them you also will sense the presence of the angel and communion with God. Perhaps in some areas of your life you, too, will find healing.

Conditions in Latin America are changing fast. Liberation Theology is sweeping Latin America, shifting the spiritual-social concept of the gospel far to the social side, thereby deceiving and entrapping many. Liberation Theology is an attempt to forge a marriage between Marxism and the Christian faith.

It is a cynical perversion of the gospel that uses God's Name to wrap the mantle of the church about the shoulders of the revolution. A professor at a liberal seminary in Costa Rica, for example, told me that because of their humanitarian works, Argentine revolutionary Che Guevara and the In-

²Matthew 8.

dian leader Mahatma Ghandi were closer to Christ than most Christians! But the professor—and those he is leading—did not recognize that true social justice and liberty results from spiritual rebirth.

A few months before Castro's thunderous anniversary speech, I was preaching in Peru. Several evening services were lit by candlelight because the Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path Communist guerrillas supported by North Korea frequently dynamite the electrical transmission towers around the country. On one occasion I walked along a street with Pastor José Zapata, a humble servant of God. He shared a true story with me which led to the theme and title of this book.

One day a pastor from the mountains near Ayacucho knocked on Zapata's door in Lima. The pastor's clothes were torn, and he needed medical help. Zapata cared for him, then learned how the Communist guerrillas had surrounded his church and killed several members, including his wife and daughter.

The guerrillas had attacked the church because it had an active youth ministry, and was reaching into the valleys and hills with the love of Christ while helping with the physical needs of the people. The guerrillas did not harm the inactive churches in the region.

After spending time with the Zapata family, the persecuted pastor returned to the mountains to continue preaching the gospel.

Pastor Zapata, who also has been beaten and

kicked by guerrillas, smiled wryly as he recalled a legend. "This persecution reminds me of the story of the dog," he began. "You have a nice dog. You feed him and love him; you pat him on the head and say nice things to him. You live very well together in the same house. One day you pull the dog's tail. He does not like this. He only wants pats, not pulls. He immediately feels threatened, in danger. Growling, he tries to bite you. You do not like being bitten, so you decide not to pull the tail again. You and the dog have a wonderful relationship as long as you do not pull his tail."

Pastor Zapata ended his story, and we continued our walk in silence. His parable rooted itself deeply into my spirit.

Churches which meet only when and where the government permits, which do not testify openly but enter useless Marxist-Christian dialogs are patting the Communist dog on the head. The Peruvian pastors who remain committed to the true gospel on the other hand are pulling the dog's—no, the devil's tail. They don't look for the tail while walking along the path of Christ's Great Commission.³ The tail lies directly across the path of true Christian evangelism, and the devil-dog tries to bite them.

This book does not try to assess the present spiritual situation of all the Christian churches in Cuba. Rather, I chose recent happenings in a few churches that typically expose the powerful anti-God machinery still actively coordinated and

³Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19.

directed by the Cuban Communist government. This machinery includes the press, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the police, Castro cultism, the Education Ministry, and the turba divina or divine mobs. All of these either subtly strangle or openly attack the Body of Christ. All form the spiritual flesh of the devil's "tail." This tail will strike at anything that opposes its movement.

I had planned to include in the Appendix of this book a list of the many church groups whose members have suffered heavy fines, imprisonments, beatings, hunger and exile. However, I find this an impossible task. Writing a book is like participating in and witnessing the growth of a living thing. The more you read and write, the more information pours in. . . .

Living Stones

Sitting at the breakfast table of friends while on a speaking tour near Zurich, Switzerland, I laughed as my hosts' yellow parakeet happily chirped in Swiss-German, "My name is Cheepsle Vetch from Wetzikon." I was traveling with Hans Koch a Christian brother from the Swiss Mission. While speaking in the area, we stayed at his uncle's home, a third-floor apartment in Wetzikon.

As we sat idly talking and enjoying the parakeet, Hans' uncle handed me a big manila envelope. It was from a friend and former prisoner, the Cuban poet, Armando Valladares, then living in Madrid. Eagerly, I spread many pages of documents and news clippings across the table cloth as the others watched curiously.

Stunned by what I saw, I put down my apple

juice, breathed deeply, then let the air hiss slowly over my teeth. Before us lay eyewitness accounts of vicious attacks on the churches of Cuba, and articles documenting other persecutions. As we read of women being molested, pianos being smashed and liquor being poured around church buildings, I immediately knew that I had to begin a second book.¹

(Later, I followed up on this testimony and received photos, cassette recordings and further evidence from Christian leaders and professors who had visited Cuba that year. All of this information corroborated the first.)

As I spent part of the day pouring over the material that Armando had sent, I remembered the story of Rev. Eliosvaldo Reyes, a pastor in the town of Holquin, Cuba.

There was no room in his small church to conduct Sunday school classes. The church had twenty new converts, and had run out of space. Noticing the beautiful blue sky outside, Pastor Reyes had an idea.

"Let's go outside and have class under that tree." He pointed out the window.

The class picked up their few chairs and small wooden stools and gathered in the side yard under a large old tree. Some who didn't have chairs or stools sat on the roots of the tree or stood.

¹The first book, *Missiles Over Cuba*, was published in 1981 and relates how I met and worshipped with many suffering Christians while in Combinado del Este Prison for smuggling the gospel into Cuba.

Pastor Reyes opened his Bible and began to teach. They had no lesson booklets or pictures, but the students listened carefully to their dynamic and loving teacher. As he spoke, the devil's tail began to thrash.

Halfway through the morning session, a car slid to a halt in front of the church and some men got out. The police. Someone walking by had called them.

As the students watched, the police angrily scolded the pastor for holding an illegal church service under the tree. They forced him into the car and took him to Corojo, Camaguey, to jail. His family and church were given no information about him. Before the evening service, the local police returned to the church and fastened a large lock on the doors. The building would remain locked except for one service a week to "guarantee their religious rights."

On Monday morning, as the pastor's daughter sat down to her desk at school, the teacher called her to the front.

"The principal would like to see you," she informed coldly.

The girl went to the office and learned that she could no longer attend school because she was the daughter of a counterrevolutionary. Arriving home, she discovered that the police had confiscated the family's food rationing book. Without it, they would have nothing to eat. Hearing of their plight, the members of the church immediately began to bring food to the pastor's house.

That week, the CDR summoned each of the

twenty new converts before their panel of neighborhood judges and demanded that they deny their faith in Christ. The believers remained steadfast.

A similar meeting is recorded in the Gospel. A man named Zaccheus had climbed a tree to see Jesus, and Jesus stopped to speak to him. Today, Christian children sing about this. In Cuba Zaccheus would be taken to jail. Jesus could not have gone to his house to eat because the ration book would be gone.

The meeting under the tree in Holguin is as beautiful. God was glorified. Perhaps someone will write a song about this.

A recently published report declares, "The Revolution has been very careful with the Church: it very carefully has set up the ties that allow its definite strangulation. The Revolution has been patient with the Church; it patiently has been waiting for the time to do its work, and has not wasted any occasion to promote its demise."

Now on the table before me were photocopies of news articles from Havana, England, Spain and the United States about the arrest of Pastor Orson Villa Santoyo. As I read the articles, the words of the Apostle Peter seemed appropriate:

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.²

²1 Peter 2:4, 5 (NKJV).

Pastor Santoyo was one of these "living stones." He had held a church service in Morrazo, the Municipio of Manacas where God had healed many people and dozens received Christ as Savior. Once again the authorities reacted furiously. And for significant reason!

In 1963, Fidel Castro had closed the only Pentecostal seminary in Cuba, located in Manacas, declaring that it was a training school for the CIA. Although officially still closed, the seminary remains a quarry for God's "living stones," a building ground for His holy priesthood. Castro had hoped to crush the "living stones" by closing the quarry. Santoyo could not be crushed.

The message was out . . . "Get Santoyo."

But he had already left for an evangelical camp meeting in Holquin in the northwest region of the island. There, under his ministry, many sick people were healed. The authorities finally caught up with Santoyo at the church in El Paulino. Accusing him of violating Article 225 of the Penal Code—illegal practice of medicine—they arrested him and drove him to Holquin.

While Santoyo awaited trial, the pastors of the churches where he had ministered in Piedra Redonda, Naranjo Agrio and Los Pataros, began preaching the gospel more boldly, disregarding the restrictions on meetings imposed by the government. Several people were saved and healed in those small communities.

Santoyo received a five-month suspended sentence. But because of so much publicity on his case, the government decided not to place him in

prison. Instead, officials "allowed" him to leave Cuba on a visit.

When Santoyo returned to Cuba, he continued preaching among the Baptists and Pentecostals in Camaguey. A fellow Baptist pastor and friend of Santoyo, when asked about the persecution, answered simply, "Many pastors in Cuba are not cowards."

Underground churches thrive in Cuba as they do elsewhere under Communist tyranny. Frequently, the families of Communist leaders worship there in secret. In a coastal town one morning, for example, a pastor's wife sits sewing. Hearing a knock on the door, she leaves her machine to answer. Three women enter the room. She recognizes them as the wives of Communist leaders in the town. They sit beside her machine and wait. The pastor's wife cautiously returns to her work at the machine, motor humming, then looks around before opening her Bible. She continues the Bible lesson from the last meeting. The "sewing class" has begun. The three students cannot worship publicly, so they attend the sewing machine church. How many of these forbidden sewing machine churches exist in Cuba?

I recall the story of a Baptist pastor who met secretly with believers in five houses in Baracoa. Through informants of the CDR, police discovered the meetings and stopped them.

The pastor boldly wrote a letter to Fidel Castro asking for permission to build a church. After all, he reasoned, this was the time of human rights and United Nations investigations.

Castro publicly gave his permission, as usual, but privately saw to it that no construction ever began. The CDR still watches the houses.

Rev. Raúl Suárez R., head of the Cuban Ecumenical Council, lied to the *Miami Herald* when he said that house meetings are permitted in Cuba. But his disinformation campaign is effective only with gullible Christians off the island. Cuban Pastor Humberto Martínez Sabo and Baptist and Pentecostal pastors from fifteen major cities across Cuba all contend that meeting in houses is forbidden. As long as the Communists keep the church contained in its inadequate, cramped, crumbling buildings, government tails wag happily. But each time the church spills out of its quarters into the community, the church pulls their tails, and the Communists react angrily. This demonic pattern has held true throughout the history of Marxist Cuba and crosses all denominational lines.

In the mid-1980s, for example, a government controlled mob surrounded the Cristo Rey Church in Havana. Father Miguel Loredó had maintained an active youth ministry there even though only 192 priests remained on the island. On Good Friday, the mob screamed for him to come out, shouting "To the execution wall with the priest!" and "Crucify him!" The police intervened, taking him into "protective custody." He then had to "voluntarily" leave Cuba.

The apostle Paul penned with great meaning his testimony, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ." Many of the persecutions

we read in the Bible take place today behind the Sugar Cane Curtain and in Communist lands around the world. The dire suffering laid upon otherwise ordinary persons produces examples of unforgettable faith.

I have observed and experienced first-hand the marks of oppression which Castro inflicts on God's people. In my cell at Combinado del Este Prison, I had much time to reflect on the anti-God philosophy that permeates every facet of Castro's society. Here, in part, is why the church in Cuba suffers. Not only has this Marxist religion served to oppress the church, but it gnaws away at the church from the inside like a cancer.

A generation of new pastors now praise Marx, Lenin, and Castro as Messiahs. Lenin once said, "We must fight religion. This is the ABC of the whole of materialism and consequently of Marxism." What has developed in Cuba reflects Solzhenitsyn's statement in 1972: "A church led by atheists—a spectacle which man has not experienced for 2,000 years."

Many former church schools now serve as Communist training centers for atheism. Located in Matanzas, the main Protestant seminary in Cuba is supported by the Ecumenical Council. The students come mainly from the Reformed Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

Rev. Sergio Arce, professor of systematic theology and a spokesman for the seminary, voices a typical Communist view of the worsening conditions between Christianity and the state. "The

Cuban people in general have lost their faith in Christians," he says. "It is the church and not the state which has to take the responsibility. . . . The Cuban Communist Party and the state have always been conciliatory towards the churches."

To give further insight into the heart of this deception, I quote from the published "Confession of Faith" of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Cuba, a member of the Ecumenical Council:

The church teaches that, when our people chose the Marxist-Leninist way of development through a social-political revolution, a more human relationship with nature has been brought about. . . .

Jesus Christ took the side of the oppressed . . . that "social-political option" took Him, objectively speaking, to the cross.

. . . The human being is a "political" being.

. . . (We) fulfill ourselves as human beings through concrete historical projects of Redemption.

. . . The Revolution has concretely and historically inaugurated a series of values in human relations.

. . . The atheist-communists serve as an inspiration to us because of their readiness and willingness to live sacrificial, solidary and effective love.

The church lives in the responsible participation of its members in the Committees of Defense of the Revolution, in the Labor Unions, in the Federation of Cuban Women. . . .

These Liberation Theology concepts reflect the state approved stand of many church leaders and the kind of indoctrination they receive. The powerful principles of God's eternal redemption, the

miracle of Christ cleansing the inner man, and the inheritance of a heavenly Kingdom are ignored or distorted to form a poor picture of class warfare, political struggle and liberation of the oppressed. The Confession of Faith never mentions eternity, hell, death, and Christ as the Way and the Truth. The weight of this absolutism and finality would overshadow their humanistic philosophy. These ultimate truths do not fit into the temporal class-war scheme they try to present.

The Communists are perplexed and furious that, despite their campaigns of diversion, despite oppression, despite substitution of young Marxists pastors in the place of Bible-believing men, the church still thrives. In the Soviet Union the church is growing many times faster than in Western Europe. As atheistic minds grow spiritually dark, they cannot grasp the concept that the church is made of "living stones." And these stones cannot be crushed.

As I write, a cassette tape lies in my briefcase with the testimony of one of these living stones, a Cuban Pentecostal pastor who was beaten and shot at five times as policemen toyed with him. A letter arrived today on my desk from Maria Armas Romero whose husband, Baptist pastor Alfredo Romero, died some years ago in Cuban prisons. The Communists now severely persecute her son. I feel frustrated that as a book nears its printing, it becomes a frozen capsule, a tiny slice of time. May God use this capsule of time for His eternal glory.

New Light Pours In

Wetzikon, Switzerland, is a picturesque town of clean winding streets, well-kept garden plots, and pink and yellow flowers in decorative window boxes. Although I enjoyed my stay in these pleasant surroundings, my mission was to share the plight of the church in Cuba and to ask Christians to pray and send letters of encouragement to these persecuted believers. Now, with this new information, the picture was once again sharply painful.

With engagements scheduled in Germany and Austria, I left a few days after receiving the material from Armando. Kurt Krieger, a Christian brother from the German HMK (Helping the Martyred Church) Mission, joined me on this leg of my journey. As we zoomed along the autobahn,

trees and villages flashing by, I continued to study the documents.

Surely this light will open some blind eyes in the free world, I thought as I shuffled the papers on my lap. I remembered a seminary professor who told his students in Indiana that I deserved to complete my twenty-four years in Cuban prisons for my illegal smuggling activities. The Cuban government had furiously taken helicopter trips to the cities we had crossed; I sadly realized that some ignorant Christians were just as furious. Strange bedfellows.

I never had an opportunity to share with this professor the unusual story of the first smuggling operation mentioned in the New Testament. There was a husband and wife mentioned in the Bible who had been warned about an action which was to be taken by their government. God himself did not recognize this government because it was evil. He sent an angel to warn this family of the impending action against them. They quietly left town at night against the government's wishes. They smuggled a precious contraband with them. Their names were Mary and Joseph. What they smuggled was Jesus Christ. He was not the illegal contraband. The Devil is illegal.

The Bible is full of such examples which are wisely interpreted today by Christians who live under evil governments. Communist rulers do not fit the definition of government found in Romans 13:3. They are anti-government because they are anti-God. God and His moral laws are the foundation of true government. A detailed discussion

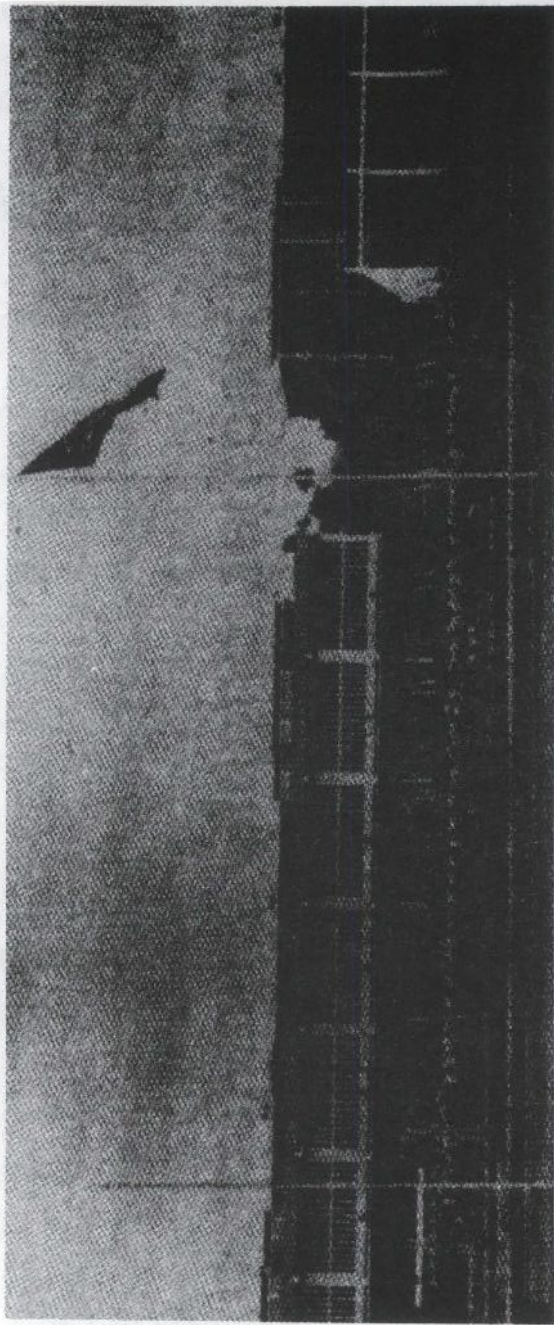
of this with several scriptures can be found in the foreword section of my first book.

The ways that God continues to shed light on the success of the Cuban operations is deeply moving to me. I receive fresh information each year about the growth of these hundreds of thousands of spiritual scripture "seeds" sown by the airplanes and ships. Despite the criticism, this continues to motivate me to greater efforts.

Some of the reports I received while still being held captive at Combinado del Este Prison.

God had led me to many contacts among the seven thousand prisoners in our complex. Two prisoners from Matanzas, who had been held there for many years, were transferred to our floor in the prison. Matanzas was near the route I had flown with John Lessing and Linda Jackson. I walked in among four of my Cuban Christian brothers to meet them. Since I was taller than my escorts, I kept my head down and shuffled along, hoping to pass unnoticed. At the end of the hall I met the men from Matanzas and we embraced.

I asked them about the time when we had made the flight. The morning after our drop, they related, swimmers, tourists and Cuban workers found thousands of the leaflets on Veradero Beach. Veradero is one of the longest, most popular beaches in Cuba, particularly among tourists. The police sent several carloads of zealous young internal security men to run up and down the beaches and in the fields to confiscate the material. This only drew more attention to the unusual event. It thrilled me to hear that the police



Combinado del Este Prison, Havana. The author and his pilot, Melvin Bailey, met the Cuban church in prison here.

were picking up some of the literature. They always read it and sometimes kept a piece before turning the rest over to their superiors. We had covered much more than the north beach, our point of exit. We had left a line widely scattered by the wind across the entire island. The leaflets were found and distributed among Cuban farmers. Once again a beautiful confirmation!

Reports from Camaguey were equally exciting. Eighty percent of the families who visited the prison and who lived in our drop zone either had a piece of literature in their homes or knew where to find some. Ranchers discovered it in their cow pastures. Our "tropical snowfall" covered the roofs and streets of Ciego de Avila.

Castro called a special meeting in this city and tried to counteract the effects of our trip. Here, too, our missiles of love had exploded. God's message had struck terror to the heart of communism. His Word had brought hope to the souls of the people.

The last information I had received about Cuban beaches was from a young Cuban prisoner.

This thin boy was a *lanchero*, one of a group given a two-year sentence for trying to flee Cuba on automobile inner tubes. He lived near Vera-dero beach and had witnessed the result of one of our massive sea drops from ship.

"There were many people swimming that day," he explained. "Wave after wave of these plastic packages began washing upon the beach." He moved his hands excitedly. "Children showed them to their parents and grabbed the chewing gum.



Combinado del Este Prison, Havana. Home to hundreds of lancheros, Christians, and political prisoners.

They took the literature home with them. Many people who hadn't been swimming came down to the beach and began looking for more.

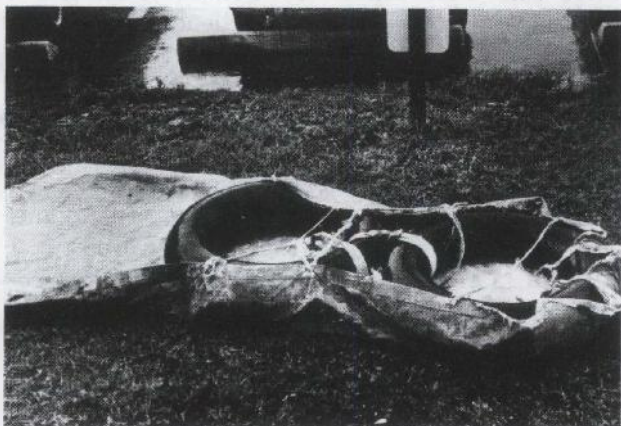
The authorities heard about it from the soldiers who patrol the beach. Sometime later, five carloads of police came to the beach and spread out to confiscate the packages of literature on the sand. There were thousands of packages. The officers would carry them to boxes and bags set up on the beach. They were told not to keep any of this as it was propaganda against the state."

The lancerero smiled, remembering this point. "These must have been the magic words . . . I learned later from friends that many of the policemen would shove some of these wet packages inside their shirts or jackets and take them home."

I was fascinated hearing him, remembering the Christians years earlier who condemned us for being too radical or for wasting money. Others told us we could possibly kill the fish. "Without a vision the people perish."¹ Narrow minded people, even Christians, can be vision-squashers. May God help us keep a balanced sense of purpose, yet "dare to be Daniels."

After our release from prison during the 1980 Carter-Reagan presidential race, additional reports of our success came through unusual channels. One day my wife Ofelia and I walked into a Cuban bakery in a certain city in the United States. The woman behind the counter kept looking at me. She wiped the flour off of her hands

¹Proverbs 29:18.



Crude raft made of canvas and Soviet inner tubes. A man who died while drifting to the U.S. on it remains unidentified.



This lanchero, thirty years old, holds up the inner tube upon which he floated through eight days of heat, storms and shark attacks to reach the United States from Cuba.



Six men, women and children wave for help after leaving Cuba on their inner tube raft.



A lancharo is reunited with his family in a Miami, Florida hospital.

and asked, "Aren't you the American who crashed in Cuba? You were throwing papers out of your plane?"

"Yes." I replied.

"Well, my son is a traffic officer. He found many of those Christian papers one night on the street and shoved them into his shirt," she explained excitedly. "Then he brought them to his home. I was visiting him in Cuba that week."

She and her bald, smiling husband came out from behind the counter and shook hands with us. I was amazed. It was hard for me to talk. We were standing there chewing their bread and they were thanking us for sending Bread to Cuba.

Two years later, I spoke several times in the maximum security section of the big prison in Chino, California. Most of the inmates were serving heavy sentences for violent crimes. On each occasion the meetings were held in a little chapel equipped with a piano, hymnals and Bibles. One of the prisoners was a talented piano player. Several brought their Bibles. After a service one morning, a young Latin man walked up to me with his head down.

"I'm a Cuban," he confessed, "and I know I'm here for a different reason than you were in prison. But I have something to tell you."

I took his hand and he looked up. "You see, my grandfather was on the beach one morning and he found one of those gospels in plastic . . . just like the one you showed us."

"That's great!" I exclaimed, happy for the information. The boy waved his hand to cut me off.

"But he didn't find just one. He found 114 and gave them to his friends."

I encouraged him in the Lord and left the prison, walking on air. . . .

Speeding along the Autobahn with Kurt, I contemplated the deep concern for the suffering church in Cuba among the Christians in eastern Europe. They considered the Cubans comrades in suffering. The Germans at the HMK Mission office had published the addresses of the Cuban Christians. Believers in the churches of Stuttgart, Kiel, Marburg, Frankfurt and other cities had begun to respond. Everywhere we traveled, we met Baptists, Pentecostals, Free Evangelicals, Lutherans and Catholics who prayed and rejoiced at the living testimonies of faith under fire.

Our itinerary took us to Vienna. There Kurt and I went with our contact to a large YMCA auditorium filled with Austrian Christians. The singing, the questions, the interest in Cuba were intense. As Kurt translated, I began to share my latest mission—a balloon invasion of Cuba.

Mission at Sea

The audience sat in rapt attention. While I spoke, two men in dark suits glowered at me from the crowd. Sitting rigidly with folded hands, they had neither sang nor prayed with us. I had seen these types before. They did little to hide the fact that they were not there to worship.

Many nights after my release from Combinado del Este, I lay awake in bed asking God to reveal new ways to bring the gospel to Cuba. People would offer ideas after some of my meetings, but often their suggestions seemed technically impossible or financially impractical.

Our mission had sent balloons over North Korea with some success. I wondered how we could send them to Cuba. Surrounded by water, Cuba is relatively narrow in some places. How could a

large quantity of balloons launched from a ship reach their target without going beyond into open sea? Would the operation be expensive?

Once again, as with my former missions by sea and by air, I began to study the technical possibilities. I went to one of the research libraries at the University of California at Los Angeles and pulled the heavy books of winds aloft charts off the shelves. I began studying the lines and little marker flags defining the upper air currents.

As before, I covered the living room floor of our small duplex with papers, books, calculators and maps—fearing for the safety of my information as Ofelia vacuumed around me. Math had not been easy for me as a student, but I found myself figuring cubic feet of helium, pounds of lift, and the velocity of upper air currents. Also history. Balloons filled with literature had flown from western to eastern Europe, I learned, and even very large ones had traveled the air currents from Japan to the western seaboard of the United States.

I made phone calls to companies which manufactured party balloons, advertising balloons and weather balloons, hitting several dead ends. One company, which specialized in manufacturing and testing large high-altitude balloons, offered to make them for me. We calculated the dimensions and material, and the engineers called some days later with a price of twenty-six dollars each. My heart sank.

I soon located the type of cutting and sealing equipment needed for the operation. With the right plastic and equipment, I could manufacture

a balloon nine feet high that could carry twenty Gospels of John. This balloon would cost less than ten cents each if I ordered enough plastic to make three thousand. I never dreamed that I would become a balloon maker!

"Many people complain that dumping gospel literature in the sea or dropping it from the sky by plane or balloons is not a good use of Christian money," I stopped my story to tell the audience. "There are many methods for carrying the gospel into areas where it is forbidden. Some take more funds and time and are less effective, but I applaud all efforts. How tragic to sit back and discuss the correct way to slice the Bread when starving people are sitting across the table holding out their hands.

"If we don't help the body of Christ," I said, "we are responsible for destroying the Body of Christ. Church leaders delight in preaching about the sins of commission and tremble at mentioning the sins of omission because their conscience-stricken members would walk out the door and never come back."

I continued my story:

Enthused over the balloon project, I again turned our home into a "laboratory for Jesus." Balloons lay everywhere. The living room. The bedroom. Little blue balloons hung from the ceilings with literature dangling from them. Bright orange nine-foot balloons stretched on the floor behind the couch. Tanks filled with helium stood in the corners of the living room.

My little son Daniel thought this was a per-

manent party just for him. Parents coming to pick up their children from Ofelia's child care business looked mystified.

I got the idea of the bright orange color while playing catch with Daniel in our front yard one day. Sometimes when I would toss his tiny orange rubber ball, he would miss it, and the ball would bounce into the green grass two houses away. I noticed how easy it was to see the ball in the grass. Highway workers and hunters also use this color to alert other people.

In Cuba the sugar cane is green, I mused. What about an orange balloon?

Lying on the living room floor, I computed the amount of cubic feet of helium needed to lift thousands of gospel portions inside 3,000 nine-foot balloons. The quantity was staggering. I would need several thousand pounds of cylinders to contain the necessary helium. I pictured a small fishing boat sitting on the bottom of the ocean, sunk by helium!

We would need a large ship. "Oh, Lord," I prayed, "if You own the cattle on a thousand hills, surely You own a few ships, too."

I remembered the lobster boat I had used in the early 1970s at the beginning of the Cuban operations. Would the captain or the boat still be available? After a few phone calls, I arranged to meet him at his home. He still had the boat. And, yes, we could use it.

Interested Christian friends had already begun to offer their help. Bob Alino was one. He had robbed banks and armored trucks before God

changed his heart. He would say that he had been in the "moving business . . . moving money from banks." Now God was using him to move people's hearts toward Jesus Christ. Working with heavy equipment, cables and props in southern California, he volunteered his services for this new Cuban project.

A former cellmate of mine from Havana, Glenn Akam, also wished to help. He knew of the spiritual hunger there and wanted to take the Bread of Life to the hungry. Glenn was an aerobatics pilot who had crashed in Cuba. Even while in prison together, Glenn and I had spent many nights sitting on cartons outside the cell, discussing a return to Cuba.

The Stanfield family from Orlando, Florida, volunteered as well. In the past they had given me a home away from home and had helped load my plane for the flights over Cuba. Now they began praying and calling on their friends to help. The Stanfields had a plane of their own and worked as missionaries in South America.

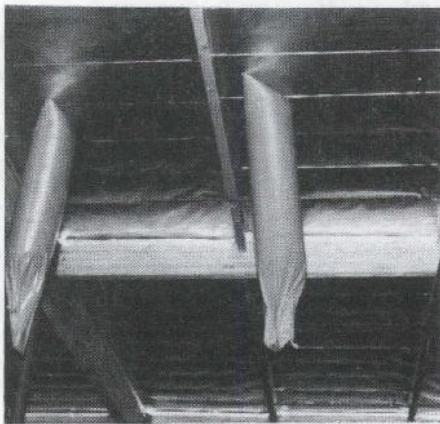
I am amazed how the power of God's Holy Spirit uses "grass-roots people" to accomplish mighty deeds.

The next eight weeks were busy with printing Spanish gospels, cutting and sealing the long pillow balloons and studying charts. A cardboard box in our dining room contained about fifty pounds of computer printouts on upper wind currents. Altitude, direction, speed, temperature—all had to be calculated.

When my mind grew weary, I would place



Rolling out the plastic sheeting to cut the special pillow balloons.



Test balloons with literature rise to the ceiling of the warehouse.

Daniel on my shoulders and stroll up and down the sidewalk outside. What a blessing! My son. I could touch him, feel the hair on his head, grateful that I was not in prison. When my daughter Dorothy would come home from school, I would chase her around the tree in the front yard, singing a song from Psalms 1 about trees planted by "living" water. To see my children growing was a miracle! Sometimes Pastor Richard Wurmbrand would come to the picture window of our living room and kiss them through the glass.

One day Ofelia, the children and I loaded a van with balloons and drove into the mountains above Los Angeles. There we released them to test their airworthiness at that altitude. They performed well.

Finally, we were ready for our mission at sea.¹ Christian friends from many different churches began flying to our rendezvous area. Meeting at a seaport, we began loading the ship with the long cardboard boxes of flat balloons. The literature had already been stuffed inside them. We passed the boxes across the dock, over the ship's rails and deck and down the ladder into the deep hold. Jim from Ohio, Dan from Tennessee, Bob and Glenn from California, Rick and Betty from Florida; Bobby, a Filipino boy from the west coast who had a heart for God—all labored joyfully. The Stanfields brought their mom along. "Mom" Davy would give us much spiritual and physical inspiration.

¹For security reasons, I cannot give the locations, some true names or dates concerning the boat trip.



Team members loading boxes of balloons at night.



Balloons lowered into the hold of the boat.

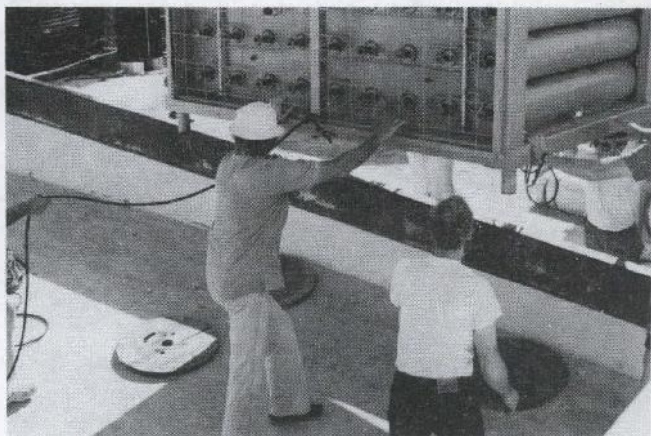
Last minute technical problems demanded the expertise of our multi-talented family. Dan, for example, was right in his element when we needed to purchase fittings to connect the helium tanks to the air hoses we would use for filling the balloons. The heavy containers of helium tanks were the last to be loaded. One of the men climbed into a big yellow crane and the motor roared to life. Another jumped up on a container and hooked the cables to the arm of the crane. The tall crane inched toward the boat, carrying one of the two sets of helium tanks. Both weighed thousands of pounds. Former bank robber Bob with Glenn and others used their sanctified muscles to swing the containers between some cables on the boat and set them into place. They positioned wooden supports underneath the metal pole legs of the tank containers so they would not crash through the deck. As the captain supervised and assisted, we lashed the containers to the sides of the ship.

That night, with everything on board, we cast off. I wondered if any nearby fishermen or dockworkers would telephone Havana. There were nine in our makeshift crew. We would need two sets of workers, one for each container of tanks. We also had thousands of Gospels in sea packages, which some of our team would throw off the back deck while the groups of balloon launchers would be working from the front deck.

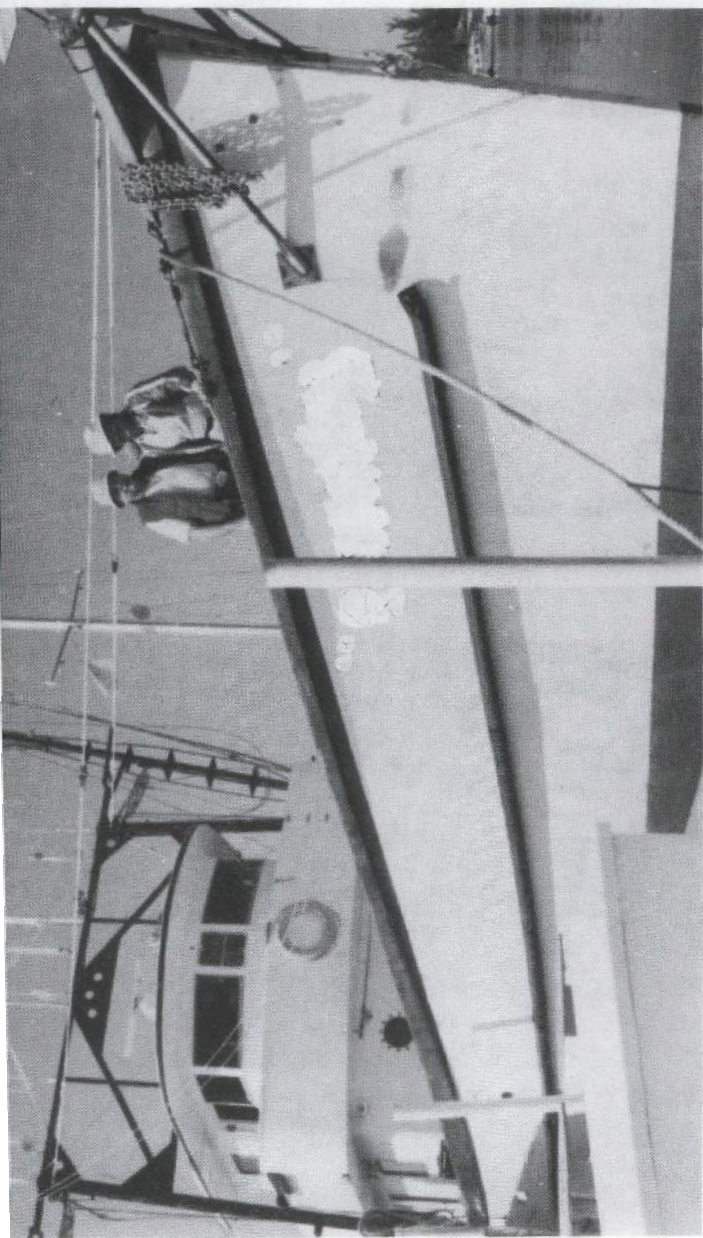
Easing out of the harbor, we prayed that God would break down the strongholds for His glory. With diesel engines throbbing below decks, most of us found places to sleep on deck or in the small



Crane lifts tanks of helium onto the boat.



Tanks swing on board. Wooden discs keep legs of crate from eating holes in the deck.



Glenn and Bob relax a moment before departure.

crew quarters. I threw a mattress down into the hold near the boxes of balloons and climbed down the ladder. The diesels put me to sleep.

In the morning I climbed out of the hold to a beautiful world of bright sun and deep blue sea. Spray flew across the bow as we splashed into the swells and began preparing for the launch. Dan and Bob connected the air hoses to the tanks making sure the brass fittings were right. Jim and Dennis brought boxes of balloons up from the hold. Although the sea was not choppy, the deck jumped and pitched, trembling at times as the boat smacked the swells. Banging heads on a tank or other piece of equipment could be a serious mistake.

We put together the two wooden launch boxes, which one of our team had hauled halfway across the USA in his van. These resembled an open crate at one end in which the balloon would rest while being filled with gas. This way they would not blow around on the deck.

Deciding to test one before arriving to the distribution area, one of the launch crews began filling a balloon. The one using the helium listened over his earphone to the recording of a metronome ticking off the seconds. I had recorded this from equipment used by one of Dorothy's piano teachers. A certain number of seconds were required for the helium to fill the balloon sufficiently to reach its planned altitude. The balloon grew quickly, reaching its full length in the box. Another in the crew taped off the corner, walked a few feet, then let it go. With the gospels safely

sealed inside, the long bright orange object climbed majestically into the sky.

We let it streak upward for a few minutes; then the captain pulled out his rifle and shot it. Slowly the balloon began to descend to the water. We did not wish to alert anyone prematurely. Friend or foe.

The day passed quickly. I remember little about the trip to the launch area since I was mentally and spiritually preparing for the coming night. Then, we would be positioned adjacent to an island of more than ten million people forbidden to receive Christian literature by a man who tried to be God. How could this trip be effective? A relatively small boat, a few people, some plastic balloons. Thankfully, God doesn't measure the way we do, or we could all go home. His power and purposes are gauged with different instruments.

Albert Einstein, commenting on power and the human condition, said, "The problem is not atomic energy; it is the hearts of men." *If one heart is changed by this trip, I thought, it will be worth it. We create eternal explosions of good when we turn men's hearts to God.*

As dusk approached, we prepared for the launch. Prayer, we realized, would release God's power for the assault. Finally, we staggered to the tanks, holding on to the cables and whatever else we could find. The growing wind seemed ominous.

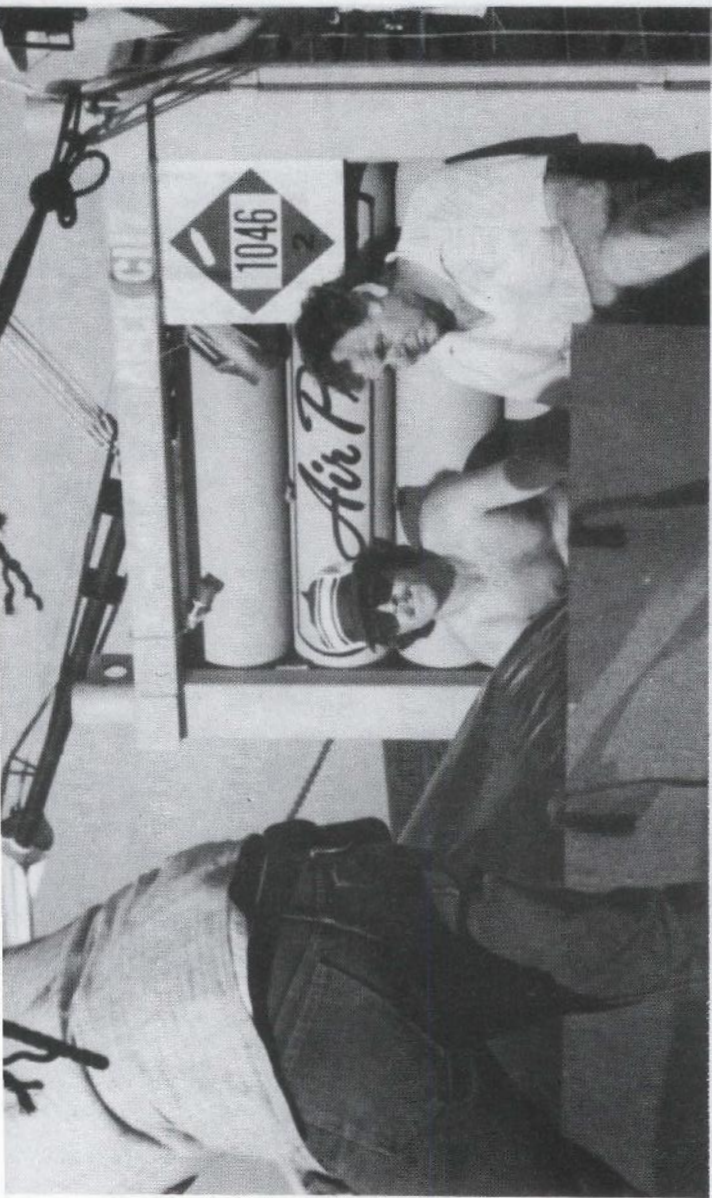
It could be a little choppy tonight, I mused. From wind chart printouts and other data, things looked good, however. Quickly settling to our tasks, we opened the valves and helium rushed out of the



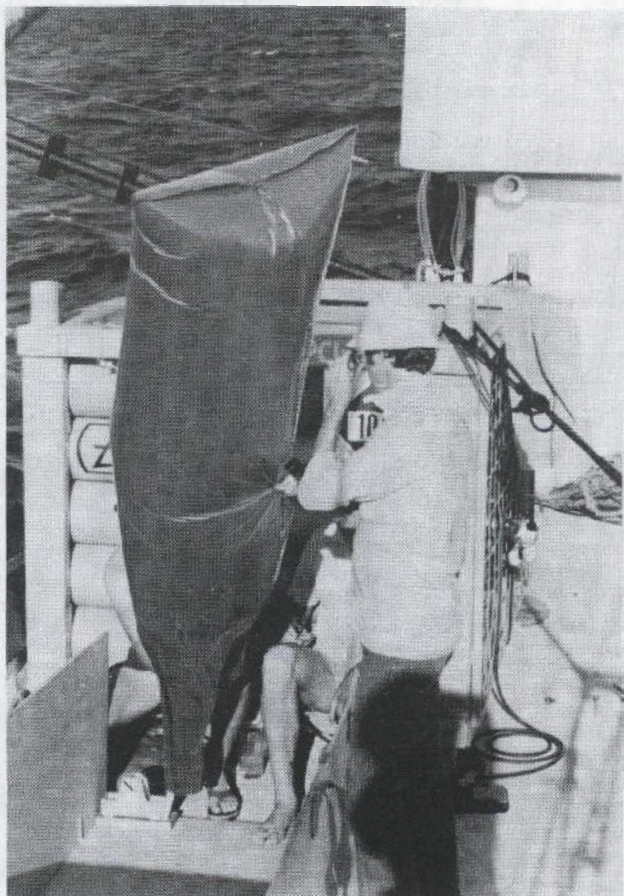
*Bob wearing headphone
ticking seconds as Dennis
inflates test balloon.*



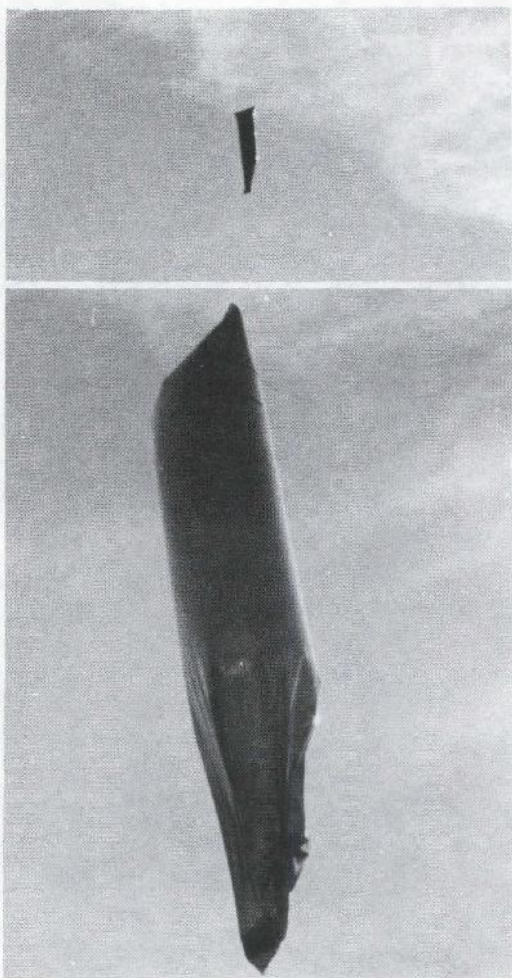
*Dan adjusting helium flow
while at sea.*



The growing balloon rises from the crate.



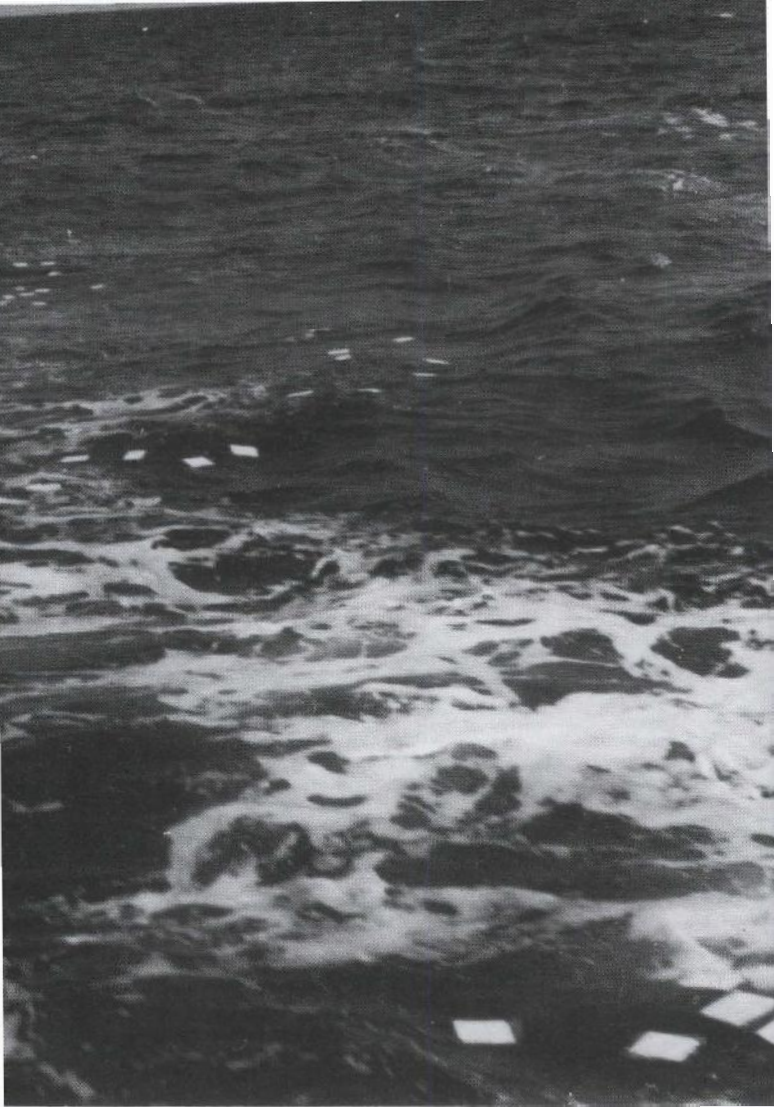
The gospel message is released for flight.



Thousands of gospel balloons were launched during the mission.



Tossing gospel packets into the sea.



God's bread on the water, floating to Cuba.

tanks through the hoses into the balloons. The two groups worked well, releasing these fiery orange packages of hope. Several a minute popped off the deck.

Darkness fell rapidly as the sun sank completely below the horizon. We took little notice as we were well into our working rhythm. At times we would change positions—Bob filling, Dennis taping, Glenn releasing, Dan opening more valves on different tanks of helium. I tried to do a little of each, and coordinate some aspects. Talking was difficult with the wind and the loud hiss of gas. We switched on spotlights tied to the containers behind our backs and kept working through the night. Meanwhile, the sea became a little choppier, but the captain held the boat on a straight course.

The night seemed long. The minutes, each second precious with so much to do; the hiss of gas in the darkness; tired arms, shoulders and backs; red eyes; hand touching hand; distributor to filler, filler to taper, taper to releaser . . . servant to servant . . . Jesus to Jesus—all part of the mission. Whether or not the work of the Kingdom seems glamorous, it is God's work, and He honors it no matter where it takes place.

Someone distributed coffee. The wind blew through our hair as we held onto cables, drank, and exchanged advice, kindnesses and small jests. My Costa Rican wife usually drinks coffee for the both of us, but this time I had some. *She's home praying*, I thought. *Her prayers move Heaven*. They had helped cut twenty-two years off my prison sentence.

Each group took turns at the coffee break. Encouraging words floated back and forth as we met briefly in the center of the front deck. "How's it going, Dan?" "Bless you brother." "Hang in there Bill." "Give some more tape to Dennis." "Hey, Glenn! It's looking good . . . Praise God."

Once during the night a few large ships seemed to parallel our course. If they were Cuban, it was jail time again! Our captain quickly turned out his running lights. We turned off all the spotlights, but kept a few flashlights on and continued to send up the big orange messages of hope in the semi-darkness. I saw Glen's shadow working with the other launch crew. He later told me that he remembered his pain in prison, but this risk in obeying Christ's Great Commission was worth it.

At 11 p.m. Mom Davy offered to cook some fresh tuna for us. As we continued launching balloons, we heard a scream from the galley. Mom was sure that a big rat had hit her on the leg. Bob left his post to come to her defense and found a flying fish on the floor under the table. The exuberant fish had jumped out of a swell and flown through the door. If it wasn't for Mom's leg, it probably could have continued out the other door into the sea. Relieved that it wasn't a rat, Mom finished cooking the tuna. Our hunger, the fresh air and fresh fish—we all declared that it was the best we had eaten.

Several hours later, we reached the turning point and headed back. The shift in the winds made it too difficult to continue launching from the front deck. Although most had been launched,

the remaining tall balloons would get caught in the cables. Wearily we all found a place to sleep, except an exhausted Dan who stayed up to keep watch. Meditating about Jesus on the Lake of Galilee, he would wake the captain on an hourly basis to check his charts.

The next morning dawned as beautifully as before. I crawled out of the hold and went to the back deck with Bob. Opening up the boxes behind the control room, we began tossing thousands of sea packages into the water. Each contained Gospels of John in Spanish with a special introduction of love for the Cuban people. Splashing into the water, the small white packets made a long line behind the ship. No land was in sight. It looked foolish, but it had worked before.

Standing with Bob on the back deck that morning, emptying the boxes filled with gospels onto the ocean swells, we prayed as we worked. "It's your bread, Jesus, we cast it on the water. Get it there, Lord . . . You see it, Lord. Move it over there, Jesus."

I watched Bob, rapidly chewing his gum, happily pouring Scriptures into the sea, a heart changed from robber to revolutionary for Jesus. "This is it," I realized. What had changed Bob is the explosive power that the Cuban Communists fear. Yahweh, the one true God, was invading their territory and stabbing them with His invincible weapon of love.

Just before entering home port, our vessel ground to a halt on a sandbar. It was a first for the captain who had many years at sea. Diesels

roaring, propellers churning the water, we were going nowhere. He radioed for help. Bob called some of the crew to the back deck and said, "Let's pray." Big rough, tough Bob knelt on the deck and asked God to help us off the sandbar. Then he yelled into the pilot house, "Try it again, captain!"

Once again the twin motors roared below decks and we slid smoothly away. . . .

While relating this story to my audience in Vienna, I noticed the unusually keen interest of the two big strangers when I described the balloon launches. After the meeting, they approached me with no kind greeting or handshake.

"Where do you live? . . .

Do you still have contacts in Cuba?" one asked gruffly.

I smiled and brushed the questions aside. They turned and left quickly.



The launch crew.

Sugar Cane Serfdom

After my three-week speaking tour in Europe, Kurt drove me back to Zurich where I boarded a Pan Am flight for New York—and eventually to Dallas.

The blue and white 747 was nudged gently as a tow truck began to back the plane from its gate position.

"Flight attendants, prepare for departure. Thank you," a female voice quickly instructed. Flight attendants dressed primly in their uniforms took their places and fastened their seatbelts snugly. The great plane taxied slowly toward the runway, then groaned to a stop. Peering through my window, I could see the tail of another airliner awaiting its turn at the runway. Moments later, our aircraft roared to life, gulping glutton-

ous amounts of air as it rapidly gathered speed and lifted like a majestic bird into the summer sky.

As I prayed for the Christians in Cuba thousands of miles away, my thoughts traveled four years into the past to a letter that Ofelia and I received one afternoon. . . .

Inside was a tiny pink piece of tissue paper about two inches square. I recognized the purple ink, made from crushed Russian vitamins and water. There in extremely fine detail were the words of Pastor Noble Alexander, still in prison at Combinado del Este. Someone had smuggled his letter out of the huge concrete and steel complex and mailed it to us.

I read joyful greetings from a man who had been kept in prison beyond his twenty-year sentence. No one had bothered to tell him that his time was up. He was simply kept. The prisoners have a term for this. They say you have "passed into eternity." While in prison with him, I had never heard him complain. Now he was sending a list of friends on his floor to see if I could do anything to help gain their release. Like Noble, all had "passed into eternity" more than twenty years: Cleto, Martel, Trujillo, and other grandfathers who had never seen their children grow, and had not met their grandchildren.

Noble asked me to send the names to Armando, but at the time I didn't know his foreign address. So I laid it on my desk wondering what to do.

Through the years, I have learned that God's timing is perfect. Ofelia walked by my desk one

afternoon several weeks later and gently chided me, "You should do something with this. Why don't you send it to Frank Calzon and Diego Abish in Washington?"

"That's a great idea," I enthused, standing up to give her a hug. I put the letter in the mail that day.

Frank and Diego worked with a Cuban human rights organization and had organized a large press conference when I was released from Combinado del Este in 1980. Both Cuban, they had many contacts in Washington. Diego had worked closely with my mother during my imprisonment, praying with her and encouraging her. When they received the letter, they forwarded it to Armando.

In a few weeks I received a call from them wondering if I could fly to Washington to testify before U.S. Congressional Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations and on Western Hemisphere Affairs. Armando would also be there. The last time I had seen him, he was sitting, legs paralyzed, in his wheelchair behind two extra sets of bars in the Cuban prison hospital. Still afraid that this "dangerous" prisoner would escape, the authorities had taken the air out of the tires of his wheelchair. Armando was released in October, 1982.

Flying to Washington that night, I switched on the overhead light and sketched information on a yellow legal pad, praying that God would use it in the best way. *How much time will I be allowed to speak?* I wondered. I tried to summarize the story of the persecuted church and Christians in

prison in Cuba, filling page after page as we flew against the clock.

Diego met me at Washington National Airport, and we drove directly to the Congressional hearing rooms on Capitol Hill. There I met several Senators and Congressmen for a pre-hearing breakfast.

Suddenly, I spied my good friend, Armando, who had "passed from eternity" to Washington, D.C. I ran up to him and gave him a hug. "Armando, look! We are here! Free! This is incredible, Thank God." How different, standing in the halls of Congress, talking freely with government officials, many of whom were Christians. Compared to our time spent in Combinado del Este, it was like standing on another world.

Armando, legs rehabilitated, rose from his chair and we embraced. "Maravilloso!" he smiled radiantly.

After a session in this room, we stepped across the hall to an immense room with stone columns and a vaulted ceiling. Television cameras stood to our right as we sat facing the front. This was where the hearing was to take place on the conditions of prisoners in Cuba.

Armando and I sat at a long table with microphones in front of us, thankful for the pitcher of water and glasses with ice that someone had set before us. Technicians came to adjust our microphones. Members of the subcommittees filed into the room and sat behind a long desk that stretched across the platform in front of us. Behind each official sat his aide and other assistants. About eighty people sat behind us, including reporters,

members of the Cuban group called "Of Human Rights," which helped organize the meeting, and the public.

Finally, red lights clicked on the TV cameras, and the hearing began. The Hon. Gus Yatron and Hon. Michael D. Barnes, chairmen of the subcommittees, opened the session.

"The subcommittees will come to order," Mr. Yatron began, setting the stage for the hearing. He spoke of Cuba's controversial role in international affairs since Fidel Castro came to power and pointed out the repression suffered by the Cuban people under his regime.

"In order to maintain its control and power over the Cuban people, the Castro government actively engages in acts of torture and harassment, as well as other drastic steps to suppress all forms of political dissent. . . ."

Other members of the committee also made opening statements. "The proud and vibrant Cuban people have been reduced to serfdom," said the Hon. Gerald Solomon. "Many of those people are friends of mine, personal friends. Their country has become nothing more than a vassal state under the heel of the Soviet Union."

The Hon. Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State, added to Mr. Solomon's testimony. "Cuban police commonly round up persons in nighttime arrests. Friends, neighbors, family members have no knowledge of their fate and frequently are too intimidated to ask. Usually these persons are tried and sentenced in secret, but sometimes they are questioned and released.

"Conditions in Cuban political prisons are

barbaric and they include the use of torture," he continued. "One former political prisoner, José Rodríguez Terrero, who was released last August, spent twenty-two years in Cuban prisons including months at a time confined naked in a tiny cell called a drawer, which forced the prisoner to curl up in an embryo-like position. Also included among the forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment employed in the Cuban prisons is the placing of prisoners in a small, sealed, un-ventilated room and totally isolating a prisoner from other prisoners and from the outside world."

His descriptions brought back ugly memories of the months I languished in prison. Mr. Abrams was not exaggerating.

"Freedom of speech and freedom of the press do not exist in Cuba," he continued. "Freedom of assembly does not exist either. Today, a network of formal and informal restrictions has the effect of limiting religious activity. The official state ideology of atheism is taught on all levels of the educational system. Specific constitutional and statutory provisions are designed to restrict religious observance and education.

"Among other restrictions on religious practice are discrimination against religious believers in educational and employment opportunities, prohibition on religious media, and restrictions on the construction of new churches. Political meetings and work obligations are regularly scheduled to conflict with religious observances.

"Cuban law prohibits the observance of religious events when they conflict with work obligations or patriotic celebrations," he observed.

"The July 26 national holiday has been promoted as a replacement for Christmas, and the availability of toys for children has been limited to the 26th of July period to the exclusion of Christmas.

"Similarly, Holy Week observances are preempted by the week-long celebration of the Battle of the Bay of Pigs."

Secretary Abrams spoke of Castro's ban on emigration, then focused his remarks on state surveillance of private lives.

"The Cuban Constitution states that the home is inviolable. Nevertheless, no aspect of an ordinary Cuban's private life is free from government surveillance," he said. "Telephones are monitored, mail is opened and one's comings and goings are watched twenty-four hours a day by the block wardens of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution.

"Meetings, parties, and other activities are subject to particularly intense scrutiny. Listening to foreign radio and television broadcasts is dangerous because of this surveillance.

The devil's tail was being pulled in many directions. By the radio, by sea, by air, by dedicated pastors and committed Christian believers. I was grateful to hear politicians, many of them Christians, taking part in the conflict. The Secretary continued:

"It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that as a result of twenty-five years of Communist control more than one million Cubans—over ten percent of the island's inhabitants have fled their homeland. . . ."

I listened intently while Secretary Abrams fin-

ished his presentation and Mr. Yatron asked, "Mr. Secretary, recently the committee staff met with two Cuban Pentecostal priests [pastors] who claim that they are free to practice their faith and have over nine thousand Pentecostal parishioners and thirty-eight churches throughout Cuba. Now given your comments, how do you account for their claims?"

"I can't account for those claims, Mr. Chairman," the Secretary shrugged. "I think it's simply untrue to say there is freedom of religion in Cuba. I know that people pass through Communist countries all the time and come out with the most incredible statements.

"There was recently a large group that visited the Soviet Union and somehow managed not to find religious oppression there either. But it does not square with the facts. If one looks at the high-ranking officials it is quite clear that it is not possible to advance in Cuban society and also be a devout believer."

Armando soon took the floor, giving an impassioned account of conditions in Cuba. "I spent twenty-two years in Castro's political prisons," he began. "In Cuba torture is a systematic practice. Castro's regime has been characterized by murder, physical and mental torture; inadequate and nauseating food; lack of medical attention; a ban on visitors and correspondence; political indoctrination and forced labor; arbitrary reimposition of sentences, thus illegally and indefinitely extending their time of their incarceration; solitary confinement in walled-up cells where prisoners age

and die without seeing the light of the sun; biological and psychological experiments; blows with sticks, iron rods, chains, cables, bayonets; and humiliating treatment including nakedness."

Mr. Yatron questioned Armando. "Mr. Valladares, while you were serving in Cuba's jail system, did you hear or learn of any religious figures also serving prison terms, specifically Catholic priests or clergy?"

"Yes," Armando answered assertively. "While I was in jail I had knowledge of Catholic priests that were in prison. I specifically remember the case of Migilanti Loredó who was savagely beaten. I was a witness to that beating. At the present time, the jails include partisan pastors of various denominations.

"Humberto Noble Alexander, an Adventist pastor, completed his original twenty-year sentence two years ago. He remains imprisoned, singled out for additional punishment for his religious activities while in jail. He is chronically ill. . . ."

Mr. Yatron thanked Armando for his testimony and turned toward me. "The next witness is Tom White. Mr. White, we look forward to hearing your statement. You may proceed."

I took a quick sip of my water and cleared my throat. "Thank you, Mr. Chairman," I began. Sitting before the microphones in that massive marble hall, I spoke the names of the grayhaired men who had been stabbed, kicked, starved and held incommunicado years past their unjust sentences. I also spoke of Castro.

"Castro is a Bible burner," I told the committee,



Armando Valladares addresses committee members with the aid of an interpreter during the hearing in Washington, D.C.



During hearings in Washington, D.C., Tom White holds handmade hymnsheets smuggled out of prison.

holding back the tears. "The World Bible Society was shocked to learn that he destroyed over 140,000 Bibles his first two years in power. He ground the Bibles to pulp in the sugar mills and kept the leather covers to make purses and wallets. The recycled material from these Bibles was used to make his Communist newspaper, the *Granma*."

Since Castro took power, only ten thousand Bibles have entered Cuba. The Communist sympathizing Ecumenical Council controlled these shipments. Pentecostals, Adventists and Baptists, not represented on the Council, received none of the Bibles.

"This is just one example of Castro's systematic persecution and oppression of religion in Cuba," I explained. "As you may know, in Cuba today there are no Christian book stores. You cannot buy Christian or religious material anywhere. There are no Sunday schools. Children under eighteen years of age are not permitted to go to Sunday school."

I was asked about the persecution of Jews in Cuba, but deferred my answer to Diego.

Chairman Yatron turned to Diego. "Mr. Diego Abich, if you could shed some light on that question, we'd be glad to hear the answer."

"Mr. Chairman, the Cuban government has institutionalized atheism. Religious persecution also applies to the Jews. There is a synagogue in Havana. It is open, but it has been abandoned. Prior to 1959, there were approximately ten thousand Jews in Cuba, now there are about two hundred left.

"The Jewish community in Cuba was very prosperous and active in the life of the nation," Diego continued, "but all their properties were seized by the government. They had suffered under the Nazis and now under the Communists of Cuba. Even the official Cuban press portrays the Jews in a very offensive way."

The public often portrays politicians as rich, power-hungry people who will say anything to get ahead. But the Congressmen I met during that morning were well-informed, concerned, compassionate people.

After the hearing, Armando and I fielded questions from reporters on the capitol steps and gave a television news interview with CNN during which I shared the story of the suffering Christians. Armando and I also had our picture taken on the capitol steps, thrilled to be at the political seat of freedom. I felt like shouting, "God bless America! Help us to make her holy and free!"

Frank Calzon, who had helped organize the meetings that day, took me to his office. Shortly after we arrived, the phones began to ring with rumors and bits of information from Cuba via diplomatic channels. Fidel Castro was planning to release a group of Americans being held there. He had done this four years earlier at election time in the U.S., but now something seemed different.

Frank strode into the room where I was working and announced brightly, "Some Cuban prisoners might be included in this group, but we don't have their names yet."

I thought about Pastor Alexander and the other Christians who had been on my floor. Would they be among those freed? I continued reading at the long table in the conference room, stretching at times and drinking a cup of coffee to stay awake after missing the night's sleep.

Frank bounced back in, smiling excitedly. "We have the list!"

I didn't ask him how he got it. Frank had friends. He began reading the names, "Cleto, Martel, Vargas Gomez, Pastor Alexander. . . ." I wasn't sleepy anymore. Of the twenty-three on the list, twenty-two were being released.

I couldn't stay seated. Something holy was happening. I pushed back the chair and stood. The tiny pink scrap of tissue paper, the smuggled letter that Ofelia had asked me to send to Washington, was the list! This was the roster seen by the man who had personally given me a twenty-four year prison sentence, the man who wished to be a god to over ten million people. My God had moved to place the list in his hands. Under pressure the door had once again swung open. At least it *seemed* that the door would open, for the roster was a tentative one.

In the past years Cuban authorities had taken liberated prisoners to the airport for their departure. Thinking that they were leaving, the prisoners made joyful declarations of freedom. But the bus returned them to the prison, and their sentences were increased. The release had been a cruel trick to test their loyalty to the state.

A few hours after receiving the news, we

learned that two special Air Cubana flights would arrive at Dulles International Airport that night with the prisoners. The FBI suspected that Havana might try to include intelligence agents in the group, posing as former inmates. Since I had been with the newly liberated Cubans in the high security cells of Combinado del Este, Frank suggested that I meet the flight to identify them. The FBI agreed.

Flight From Hell

Late that night we drove out to Dulles. Security police had sealed off an entire section of the airport to the public. Officials and agents paced about with hand held radios. Men in dark blue suits with ID photos on their jacket pockets checked credentials. We strolled back to a reception area where the passengers would arrive in a few hours.

Entering the room I noticed a short slim woman in a business suit talking to a group of men. I ran over to her and, taking her in my arms, lifted her off the floor.

"Sharon!"¹ I exclaimed.

She smiled brightly, and we began talking. She

¹Name changed.

had worked with the U.S. State Department in Cuba. The last time I saw her, I was meeting with Captain Salcines in his office at Combinado del Este. Sharon would visit the American prisoners when the Cuban government permitted. In one of our last meetings, she had given me a copy of the *Granma*.

"Here," she had said, handing me the newspaper. "I thought you would enjoy some reading." Captain Salcines seemed happy to see her handing me the official party newspaper. Inside, however, was a package of timeless news—a Bible. My mother had given it to the American officials.

Now we stood in the clean, beautiful airport of our nation's capitol—well dressed, well fed, and for the first time since all of those restricted, tense meetings, we could speak. You don't know what that means to talk—just to open your mouth and talk—unless you have lived under the Marxist Muzzle. It seemed as though a great gag had been taken off of our mouths—two people, laughing and talking in an airport for a few minutes. Since Castro had thrown her out of Cuba, she had become a higher official in the United Nations offices.

The atmosphere in the room soon livened. The radio on the hip of a man near us crackled, "Be advised . . . planes . . . on the ground . . . taxiing toward the reception area." People rushed to their areas of responsibility. I said good-bye to Sharon and hurried across the room with Frank and Diego. We could hear the big jet engines winding down outside.

Suddenly another voice on the radio announced, "They're going to Page . . . He's unloading them at the wrong place." Security people began running across the floodlit area to the big Ilyushin jet with the orange stripe. The confused pilot, in the lead plane, had never been to Washington D.C.

The Americans came down the ramp first—thin, pale men with prison haircuts. Many were sailors or pilots who had been accused of various criminal offenses and were now being released before election day.

We waited for the Cubans. Four G-2 officers, the Cuban equivalent of the Russian KGB, accompanied them on the second flight. Radios remained silent while we waited. As the second hand on the big clock in the room kept turning, I wondered if Pastor Alexander was really on the plane.

I remembered the dream I had after my own release from prison. I was standing on a red clay road. I had been walking and stopped to bend down and tie my tennis shoes. While I tied them, three men jogged down the road toward me—Noble Alexander, Cleto and Martel. They stood expectantly beside me while I finished. Then, we ambled down the road together.

Was that a spiritual dream or a literal picture of things to come?

The Cubans began stepping one at a time down the ramp. Trujillo, with his bushy eyebrows, now gray, limped over to shake my hand.

"Tomás, don't you remember me?" We hugged.

Martel, still with no teeth, vigorously pumped

my arm up and down. Then came Cleto, bald, with his broad smile and warm greeting. "Tom, how are you, brother?" We hugged, slapping each other on the back.

"He's coming" Cleto beamed, pointing back to the ramp. "Noble is coming!"

Meeting these men was like opening a time capsule. All had been in prison for more than twenty years. They had never seen their children marry, never held their grandchildren in their arms. Andres Vargas Gomez stepped down the ramp. Andres, with one kidney and white hair had been my Spanish teacher. He spoke several languages and once represented Cuba to the United Nations. A kind humble servant of God, he had spent hours explaining verb conjugations to me. I remember standing with him, breaking the hidden bread that we all used for communion. It had been dangerous for us to be seen together on the fourth floor wing of Combinado del Este. He walked over with great bearing and dignity and took my hand.

"Tom, it's so nice to see you," he greeted in his small gentle voice. After more than twenty years of beatings and hunger and nakedness, of being lashed by the devil's tail, of speaking with no anger, he stood quietly on the gray carpet before me with a "nice to see you." Truly a miracle.

Next, the one who had led many of those forbidden church services in prison, a short muscular black man with a shining smile—Pastor Noble Alexander—stepped deliberately down the ramp. I hurried over to him and we greeted each

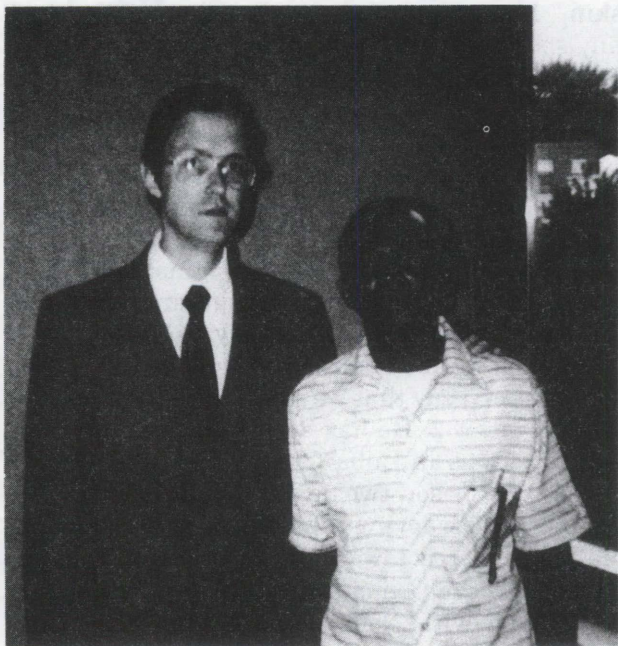
other by slapping hands. As his leathery, muscular palm met my thin hand, we laughed and called each other by our special greeting, "clean skin." I wondered if the early saints of God had any special words of affection, or did they stiffly speak with "thee" and "thou" as they said goodbye on their way to the lions? We deify them, not having to relate to them as flesh and blood people. But God uses flesh and blood. He uses us.

In the hearing that morning I had spoken dearly of my beloved friend. "Noble was sentenced to twenty years for preaching on original sin in Matanzas," I had said. "It was a regular sermon but the Communists took offense saying, 'Well, if you are preaching about sin that means we're sinners, too. You can't say that we're sinners.' His sentence was up in 1982. He has been in six or seven different prisons in Cuba for twenty-two years. He remains in prison two years past his sentencing. He is the most loving, kind person I've ever met. He holds hatred toward no one, but he does not agree with the Communist regime in Cuba."

Walking with Nobel from the plane into the terminal that evening I recalled our days together in Combinado del Este. . . .

He had been in prison nearly twenty years when we met. Sneaking out of my cell to visit him on the Cuban side was risky, but with silent hand signals and prisoners stationed at certain locations, I was usually able to move around as I pleased. I prayed as I dashed past certain check points until I arrived at his cell.

Noble, I observed, was an unusual pastor. With



thick fingers and hands like steel, he could make a shirt from a bedsheet with stitches so fine that they were almost invisible. His back was scarred with rifle-bullet fragments and chips of concrete. While in La Cabana prison, he lead a prayer group. The guards sometimes fired into the middle of the circle to disrupt the service. Most of the men would not move, but continued to sing and pray while the shrapnel tore into their flesh.

"Sometimes one of us would break the circle and run," Noble told me once. "But he would come back. The guards would beat us and beat us." He smiled as if enjoying a private joke. I learned that it wasn't a joke at all—but a private joy. Nobel's back was scarred, but his spirit wasn't. He gave half of his food to older or weaker prisoners.

"Why are we being called pilgrims, and how did everyone know about our literature?" I asked Noble one day.

"We have been reading your tracts," he explained happily. "The first week in June some were passed into the prison. We all read them."

The first week in June was only a few days after Mel and I had crashed in Manzanillo. The literature was dropped in Camaguey province more than two hundred miles away! If it was smuggled into the prison such a long distance away, how was it being received in the towns where we had dropped it? We would learn more. We were in God's school.

Noble taught me, not with words, but with his example of sacrifice mingled with joy. During his eighteen years in prison, he and other Christians have been enrolled in the rich, rewarding school of sufferology. The apostle Paul speaks of "the fellowship of His sufferings" in Philippians 3:10.

Sufferology, martyrdom, pain, and oppression among the brotherhood are courses never taught in schools of theology. God Himself teaches these classes, graciously inviting us to attend, never forcing us. When we avoid them, we miss priceless fellowship and settle for cheap, comfortable substitutes.

The forbidden prison church services, led by Nobel and Andres, were back to back. About thirty or forty men would crowd into the room for the meetings. The love of Christ and hunger for spiritual food in that starvation environment brought us together in many ways despite strong doctrinal differences.

Many Sunday mornings, I was successful in sneaking into their area. John 8:59 records how Jesus hid in the midst of persecution. Perhaps He did so many times in fulfilling His ministry. Jesus still hides today. The living Jesus in the hearts of Christians around the world helps them hide when necessary.

One day while I was helping Noble prepare the "pulpit"—a bedsheet draped over a board—one of the guards named Pedro rushed into the long room looking for me. He had seen me pass. The men quickly placed me on the top bunk and covered me with a sheet. In this gallery of sixty-five men, many were old, sick and paralyzed, and still in bed. I lay deathly still with my head covered, like one of them.

"All right, where is he? Where is the American?" Pedro fumed. "I know you have him here!"

The men said little, joking with him a moment. The roomful of prisoners functioned as a unit, a family, as brothers. Pedro stormed out, unaware that his hand had been resting on my bed as he stared around the room. Once more the Lord Jesus could hide, and I was honored that He had protected me in such a miraculous way.

Pastor Alexander patiently draped the sheet,

pinning it precisely, undoing it, adjusting it in a labor of love. His quiet, patient movements during these moments spoke thousands of sermons to me.

He had finally been secretly ordained by ministers coming to visit other faculty members. They had gathered quickly in the big visiting hall, out of sight of the guards, and prayed while laying hands on Noble. This reminded me of David's secret ordination by Samuel in 1 Samuel 16.

The men stood around the walls. Their hymnals were miraculously produced, copied on cigarette package paper with a twenty-year-old pen and homemade ink. The beautiful lines and letters, in Nobel's handwriting, were loving works of art—love letters to God. He had spent hundreds of hours copying hymns and poems. These, too, would soon be confiscated. But when the words are written on your heart, your treasure is in a secure place.

The singing began, powerful waves of love and victory pouring out of many throats. The amazing sound washed over me. Tears welled in my eyes. Miraculously, I was standing there in a circle of love and compassion, a little candle in the midst of brutal darkness. The impression that spoke most to my heart was power, victory. A visible, tangible, power radiated from these men's faces and resonated in their voices. I saw machete scars on their arms. Some had heart problems, arthritis; others were crippled. All had few material possessions. In the eyes of most of the world, they had nothing. Yet they had everything.

Noble spoke, wearing a special clean white shirt he had made from a bedsheet. In a quiet, calm voice, always with his brilliant smile, he spoke of Jesus the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Savior, the King. The men requested prayer, asking help for their families, for their island. Few ever wanted anything for themselves. They bowed their heads, and one would pray—for the free world, for America, for Europe, for the Communists. . . .

Standing in the Dulles International terminal with Noble and the others, I felt proud to be a brother. A hundred reporters with camera crews heralded their arrival and carried their story. In his kind manner, Andres told of the repression and iron grip that Castro maintained.

The taste of freedom was sweet.



These solid steel doors in Cuban prisons seal off all light and communication. The author with Pastor Alexander and hundreds of believers have lived in such solitary cells at "La Villa Marista" —Security Police Headquarters in Havana.

Only a Shadow Dog

The pleasant voice of a flight attendant aboard the Pan Am 747 to New York jerked me back to the present. "What would you like to drink, sir?" She smiled cheerfully, hand poised beside the serving cart.

"Seven-Up would be fine, thank you." I answered quickly.

The plane seemed to hang motionless in the sky with only a few slow moving clouds below and the quiet roar of the engines to indicate that we were moving. I squinted in the glare of the sun glinting off the engine out my window.

Around me businessmen bowed their heads in homage to their work. I, too, bowed my head—pouring over the material Armando had sent to me in Wetzikon documenting the sufferings of

Christ's church in Maffo, Contramaestre and Santiago de Cuba . . .

One of the many spiritual sparks which now erupted after thirty years of enforced darkness was ignited by the preacher Rafael Mendoza. Rafael led meetings in the churches at Santiago de Cuba and in the town of Cristo. As news circulated in these cities of the lives that were changed, marriages healed, spirits encouraged, bodies touched by God, a considerable part of the population was greatly moved.

Caught unprepared, Communist Party authorities and State Security forces were astonished to see this religious awakening. As one believer put it, "This is the rebirth of the Cuban citizenry, which places the Marxist-Leninist myth in great danger."

In those first few days of the awakening, clusters of green-shirted men of the National Revolutionary Police (PNR), stood on street corners or rode in their Lada automobiles discussing the "superstitious" and "unscientific" meetings. They laughed with each other, telling religious jokes and making other demeaning remarks, which one Baptist in Cuba called an "atheist catechism."

But their problem could not be discussed or laughed away. Three decades of spiritual hunger would not be denied.

The church had not completely starved to death as they had imagined. The hunger pains were acute.

In early February, Mendoza traveled to the village of Maffo and preached for four days. People

gathered by the hundreds. The leaders of the town viewed this dramatic religious awakening with dismay.

Spying out the situation, they slipped among the crowds who had filled the church and the streets, listening for information. In plain clothes, wearing their light colored short sleeved shirts, they asked questions. "Why have you come?" Who organized this?"

Many of those who had traveled into town from the state farms claimed that they had been ill and that God had healed them during the services. They described the hope found only in Jesus Christ. People from the town of Maffo also gave glowing reports. The officers knew some of them and silently recognized that their illnesses were gone. Mystified, the infiltrators continued their low-key investigation that week seeking a scientific explanation or a "logical conclusion."

The Christians in Maffo considered the miracles a heavenly sign of revival and the imminent second coming of Christ. Each night the crowds increased as word spread throughout the countryside.

Frustrated over not finding their "logical conclusion" after four days of investigation, the town leaders alerted the Security Forces. Quickly they moved in and surrounded the church. Black boots and green shirts held back the tide of believers pressing to get into the church.

Pastor Abel Sanchez Ruiz and his wife Martha, who had invited Rafael Mendoza, were concerned. Under his ministry, the crowds had jammed the

church and overflowed outside. The law forbade people to gather outside of the building. Yet the authorities would not give permission to enlarge the sanctuary—by design a trap, a slow strangulation. And now the police. Was there a way out?

Not wanting further trouble, Pastor Ruiz walked to the Registry of the Association of Municipal Religious Matters, which helps to control church growth in Cuba, to plead for larger facilities. He approached a man seated behind a desk and said quietly, "Our church is too small . . . believers are standing in the street. We do not wish to disturb the peace. Please, can you allow us to use a larger building?" The official, unsmiling and curt, denied permission as he had done on many previous occasions.

Pastor Ruiz remained determined. Closing the office door he thought, *We will just go to Contramaestre.*

In sending out His disciples Jesus instructed, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"¹ In the modern way of shaking the dust off his sandals, Ruiz telephoned Pastor Auspicio Mora of

¹Mark 6:10-12 (NKJV).

the church at Contramaestre, asking if the meetings could be moved there.

Once again, word flew around the community. Sensing that the cloud of God's glory was moving, people began travelling to Contramaestre along the edge of the Sierra Maestra mountains.

The church at Contramaestre had been in government hands for twenty years. It was first remodeled into an apartment house. But as people left Cuba, the building became vacant and later was changed into a shoe factory, then converted into a mattress plant. At each change the Christians tried in vain to reclaim it. Four years ago the government had finally returned the building, filthy and in disrepair, to the Christians.

Of the one hundred and twenty churches of the Assemblies of God, only ninety remained open. No new churches were allowed. Many Christians had no regular place to worship. Massive numbers of people filled the old Contramaestre church and crowded around the outside of the building by noon of the day after the closure of meetings in Maffo. Standing in the sun, they waited for the 2 p.m. service to begin. Seekers and believers continued to pour in from both sides of the street desiring a touch from God and to listen to His Word. As in Maffo, the local police had never seen such an open manifestation of faith.

This time the police reacted angrily. They waded into the crowd from both sides of the street yelling, "Go home!" Many believers had traveled long distances and refused to leave. More security forces came to the aide of their comrades. These

Christians were not staying in their small religious boxes on Sunday morning as had been presumed. No longer patting the devil's head by obeying the government's restrictive laws, they were growing, openly testifying, pulling the devil's tail.

At 11 a.m. the same day, Pastor Ruiz and his wife Martha, visiting from the Maffo church, received a citation to appear before the authorities. They went to the Registry office in Contramaestre with their two sons, ages two and four. Upon entering the office, police arrested them and drove their whole family to the State Security office for questioning.

During the long interrogation, Martha noticed that her husband had ripped his pants in the back. Pastor Ruiz asked the police to drive him, just for a moment, to the pastoral home where he would change his pants.

"Where you are going, you won't need any pants," one officer threatened.

Martha's heart beat faster. *I must tell somebody. I must get help*, she determined silently. After several hours of questioning, the children—tired and hungry—began crying.

"Can I please take my boys home to feed them?" Martha pleaded.

The interrogator smiled patronizingly and quickly gave his permission.

Surprised, Martha hurried away with the children. She called some leaders in the church then returned to the police station. Pastor Ruiz was gone.

"Where did you take my husband?" she demanded.

The same official smiled and shrugged his shoulders. Auspicio Mora, another pastor who had been arrested at the same time, had also disappeared. The PNR assumed that their arrests would deal the killing blow to the meetings. These techniques had worked many times before. Nevertheless, the people continued to wait for an afternoon service. At first only a trickle of believers stood in front of the church doors, then a handful, then a hundred, then hundreds.

Several years ago Fidel Castro lied to reporters in Jamaica when they asked why no new churches had been built in Cuba. He said Cuba didn't have sufficient cement. Cuba, however, is a major exporter of cement. The believers waiting in the street that morning for the service to begin did not need cement. They were the cement. 1 Peter 2:5 says the church is made of "living stones." The rocks of Contramaestre were crying out and they would not be silenced.

At two o'clock, the afternoon service began with a devotional. Then Mendoza fearlessly strode to the front of the auditorium, opened his Bible, and began to preach and pray for the sick according to James 5:14, 15. The surprised police could not get to him because the room was packed. As the service concluded at 3:30, they elbowed their way down the aisle and grabbed him and Arrendo Perez Pupo, a visitor from the church at El Cristo, and a third believer named Carlos Gorra Rodríguez. The police forced them into the back seat of

their car and sped them to the offices of State Security.

The police rejoiced over their prizes until they discovered that Rodríguez had fought with Fidel and Raul Castro in the nearby Sierra Maestra mountains during the early days of the Revolution. Now Rodríguez was a revolutionary for Jesus Christ. They questioned him for two hours, then let him go.

The police questioned their other prisoners all night. The interrogators included a colonel of security, a state prosecutor, and Chief Justice Juan José García Rimbla.

"You were inciting a riot," they accused. "These are counterrevolutionary acts." Mendoza and Pupo sat silently, wondering why the same questions were being repeated over and over. But the monotonous questioning and barrage of accusations were a ploy to keep the pastors from returning to the church.

The evening service had been scheduled for six o'clock. Thinking that the church would cancel its meeting for lack of leadership, the Security Forces circulated word that the pastors had been arrested. By service time, however, hungry believers packed the seats and aisles of the church, waiting for the service to begin. Who would lead? How or where does God's ordination begin?

David Enríques Castillo, president of the church youth group, and two of his brothers boldly took charge. The singing began. Hundreds of lips burst into praise, their voices pouring out the doors and windows and down the street. Nothing had changed.

The authorities quickly realized they had not quenched the fire. They needed reinforcements. They alerted the CDR, which immediately began to marshall its forces into a turba divina or divine mob.

Young David Castillo, with open Bible, calmly presented the gospel of Christ, then prayed that God would heal the sick. During his prayer, the doors of the church swung open rapidly, banging against the walls, as the turba divina burst into the sanctuary. Screaming vulgar songs praising communism, they jumped in the air and twisted in a type of dance, mashing and pushing the believers packed in the aisles.

Some of the mob blindly swung large sticks hitting the heads, arms and shoulders of worshippers. Women screamed as the attackers shocked them with electricity from cattle prods. The prods could be obtained only with the knowledge and consent of the police. Many believed that it was plain clothes policemen who used them.

Forcing their way to the front, a group of muscular men stopped David and his brothers. The insults and jeers of the mob grew louder as the lights in the sanctuary went out. Now in the darkness, they could kick and beat without discovery. Suddenly, a woman in the middle of the congregation turned on her flashlight, which rapidly drew the mob's attention. Angry CDR members tried to climb over the pews to put out the light. Failing that, they threw sticks and rocks in its direction. Quickly, an even larger group of Christian women hovered around the light to protect it.

Meanwhile, most of the Christians had run out of the building. Now they watched helplessly as a group of men climbed on the porch roof of the white building. Others handed up cans, buckets and brushes, which they quickly used to paint blasphemous slogans across the front.

With a large brush one of the turba divina painted, "Vive el comunismo"—"Long live communism." Another scrawled, "Logic is against religion, science is strength." Others daubed, "Long live young Communists who will not deceive us" and "Religion, what for, if we have science?"

Men sweating in the warm tropical night, slapping slogans on the walls—a sad waste of energy! They could disfigure the building, but not the "living stones."

Scoffers portray the mistakes of Christians and church institutions in scornful color. But not one drop of paint will permanently stain the magnificent white robes of the Lion of Judah—Jesus Christ—and His true followers. The paint looks bad, but it doesn't stick.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "The shadow of a dog cannot bite." Our flesh is only the shadow; our spirit lasts forever. Unfortunately, we think and react opposite from the way that God created us. When the enemy attacks and spits upon our flesh or insults our personality, how do we maintain a calm spirit and not retaliate? The problem lies in our lack of spiritual vision. The dog which bites at our flesh is only a shadow dog, and a shadow dog can only bite a shadow. With spiritual eyes, we can love our ene-

mies and try to lead them out of the shadows into the incredibly beautiful reality of the spirit. We "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," the Psalmist observed. Only the shadow. For the Christian, death does not exist.

Uniformed police arrived during the vandalism and beatings that night, not to stop the attack, but to take David Castillo and two Christian women from the church to the offices of State Security in Contramaestre. The three were later placed in another police car and driven fifty miles to the seaport city of Santiago de Cuba. For seventy-two hours the authorities at the First Unidad of the Revolutionary National Police Station questioned, mocked, laughed at and accused David and the women of false crimes.



The church at Contramaestre. One coat of paint does not cover the Communist slogans.

Chief Justice Rimbla, who had interrogated the pastors, led the interrogation. With an angry red face, he boasted that his first attack on the church had been a mild exercise. Standing up, he jabbed his finger at David. "The next time we alert the CDR and the town, they will tear your church apart!" he fumed.

David tried to say that he had permission to preach by Rev. Auspicio. But his accusers, who had traveled to Santiago to present their case, shouted him down. They denounced him for disturbing the peace and engaging in counterrevolutionary activities. Many of them had wielded the sticks and the rocks during the assault on the church.

Finally, Rimbla triumphantly declared, "You



The family of Pastor Auspicio Rodríguez Mora holding up the light of their testimony. Contramaestre, Cuba.

are now fined two hundred pesos for acts listed in Article 225 of the Penal Code, "Illegal Practice of Medicine."

David was shocked. The fine represented two and a half months' wages. The charge was even more ridiculous. Praying for God to heal the sick was now called an illegal practice of medicine!

Undaunted by this incident, the believers of the Maffo and Contramaestre churches later worked together to pay the heavy fine and continued to declare God's healing power. Healing from God does not undermine science, they asserted boldly, but compliments it.

The believers in Maffo and Contramaestre had pulled the devil's tail and, from all outward appearances, the devil had lashed back and won. But appearances are only shadows. New names had been written in the Book of Life.

"O God of Martí"

Three weeks after the attacks on the Contra-maestre church, the authorities shifted their attention to Santiago de Cuba. Located at the southeastern end of the island across the Caribbean from Jamaica, Santiago sprawls between the mountains and the ocean. Here the fires of revival had spread, sending panic among officials of the Communist state.

The old Assembly of God building on Martí Boulevard had received little repair or renovation since the 1958 Castro Revolution. The Christians who worshipped there had sacrificed to buy paint—practically unobtainable—to refurbish the outer walls. Despite the run-down condition of the inside, Pastor Manuel González Dotres faithfully preached God's Word. Many in the congre-

gation received physical healing as the revival spread to the city. Doubters, scoffers and the curious who came to visit invited Jesus Christ into their lives.

The adversaries were the best witnesses. Those who came to smash the church and disrupt the services admitted that healings had taken place. But, they lied, medical doctors had secretly done this.

The miracles in Santiago crossed all social strata. One mother, for example, had a young daughter with badly curved legs. A prominent professor in the city, she would not attend church for fear of losing her job. So she sent her daughter with someone else. God touched the child's legs. With tears of joy, the professor took her daughter door to door in her community to show her friends and neighbors what God had done. Members of the CDR, some of the neighbors were furious over the miracle. Others, even members of the Communist Party, believed when faced with the power of the living Christ.

One family came two nights to the church, bringing their seven-year-old daughter who had cancer of the liver. But they could not enter for so many people waiting to go in. Disappointed, they took her back home and prayed. Like the blind man in John 9:36, they knew little of Jesus Christ or God. With their small amount of faith, however, they raised their arms in the direction of the church and prayerfully repeated five times, "O God of Marti, please heal our daughter."

The next week they took her to their doctor in Havana. He could find no trace of the cancer.

One woman who worshipped two idols came to a service after hearing of the miracles. She was severely crippled in her legs. At the end of the meeting, she called the idols by name, stating boldly, "You will have to stand aside because Jesus is coming." She accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior. God healed her legs, and she left the building walking normally.

God was demonstrating His power to a desperately seeking nation.

Word flew around the great city. People came by the busloads. Teachers, nurses, cane cutters. People from the countryside. People who had never been to church. People whose spirits and bodies needed a touch from the living God.

The city's newspapers began to attack the church. In page-length two-column editorials, the press described the church as a superstitious institution that spreads lies to fool the people. Multitudes discussed the articles openly and boldly on the streets of the city and in local buses. Neighbors of those whom God had touched, wives of husbands whom God had delivered from alcoholism, a woman whom Christ had healed of a massive infection, Communists who had renounced their Party membership to follow Christ—all talked excitedly about God's intervention. They openly accused the newspapers of lying. At last, Christians in this second largest city of Cuba had taken off the proverbial gloves. As in Maffo and Contramaestre, they were pulling the devil's tail.

The Committee for the Defense of the Revolution mobilized. Its squads canvassed house to

house throughout the city, and in the countryside, warning people not to attend the meetings. Doing so, they said, would be a counterrevolutionary act. The people knew that disobeying the CDR would subject them to demerits for being religious. These demerits prevent the religiosos from buying certain goods in the stores.

The CDR's campaign, however, publicized the services even more. The revival in Contramaestre had attracted hundreds. The meetings in Santiago de Cuba attracted thousands.

In one of the largest public spiritual awakenings in decades, people poured into the city in old rented buses, on foot, and on bicycle. Through his strenuous schedule of preaching and prayer, Pastor Manuel lost his voice. He postponed the evening meetings for a few days so he could recover. But, as in Contramaestre, the people still came.

That Wednesday afternoon thousands of visitors stood on the sidewalks blocking the entrance of the church. Inside meanwhile, several members of the church met for prayer. Longing for another encounter with the living Christ, the visitors began knocking. Joaquín Robet, president of the church's youth group, slipped through the parsonage and strode up Rizal Street to Paseo de Marti and the front door of the church.

"Pastor Manuel has lost his voice," Robet announced. "He cannot talk. We have postponed the special service until Sunday, March 13th."

Still the people did not want to leave. Many had traveled great distances. Where would they go? Tired of the nothingness they had suffered for decades, they thirsted for something more.

Finally, those who attended the prayer meeting stepped outside the sanctuary with Pastor Manuel. Quieting the crowd, he whispered hoarsely, "Please, please go to your homes. They will accuse you of disturbing the peace."

Some understood, knowing of the attack on the Contramaestre church.

"Come back on Sunday," the pastor invited.

As the people began to leave, a police car arrived at the edge of the gathering. Several officers dressed in military uniforms elbowed through the crowd to the front of the building. They quickly seized Joaquín and two believers standing beside him, Neuly and Portorreal. They began pulling them through the throng toward the car.

Many times before, the mouths of the believers had remained closed in numbing fear as authorities arrested, beat and killed pastors. Today was different. As the police neared their car, the people surrounded it, slapping the roof, trunk and hood with their hands. The drumming noise increased as some in the crowd shouted at the green uniformed knot of men, "Abusers!"

The green shirts continued to shove and push toward their car. Another believer shouted, "Put the thieves in prison; they are all over the street. Leave our brothers alone. They haven't done anything!"

Although filled with righteous anger, the people never pushed or hit the police. As the car slowly made its way through the throng, hundreds began to shout, "Long live Christ the King! Glory to God! Long live Christ the King!"

The Christians followed the police car to the

5th Precinct, only two blocks from the church building. For the first time since the Revolution, the police were not chasing them. Instead, the people were in pursuit.

The officers escorted the three Christians inside the station where officials confidently began their accusations. At first the authorities believed they had only a few religiosos to question. But the roar of human voices outside abruptly interrupted the interrogation. A shocked green shirt peeked through a window to see men, women and children filling the streets and sidewalks around the station, praising God. Clearly, the saints had gone to war with their lips proclaiming, "Christ . . . to His Name be glory! Glory! Glory to God!"

Never in the history of the Revolution had such a thing occurred. Furious, the Chief of Police, Rogelio Acosta, burst open the door and ran outside. These Pentecostal fanatics must not wreck his career! Hoping to intimidate the others, he grabbed one protestor near the front and jerked him inside. But he had captured a Baptist. Yoel was a believer from the Third Baptist Church of Santiago. Dismayed, the officers believed they were fighting a conspiracy. Indeed, the Christians conspired in love.

The chief ordered the Christians across the city to La Seguridad, the main interrogation headquarters.

"If you don't confess to these counterrevolutionary crimes, you will remain in jail!" Chief Acosta bluffed. The police were not only angry but worried. Thousands of sympathetic people in

the city knew about these arrests. Afraid of this rare demonstration by the people, the police could not hide their actions. Reluctantly, they released Joaquín and the others.

The authorities reacted vengefully to the pulling of their tail. Immediately they put thousands of CDR members on alert.

Their retaliation came swiftly.

That afternoon dozens of men and women from around the city began pushing heavy carts loaded with beer through the streets. Arriving in groups in front of the church, they began unloading their cargo. The glass bottles clinked musically as the sweaty persecutors stacked dozens of cartons against the church walls.

Soon other groups arrived with boards, panels and nails. The pounding of hammers formed a peculiar rhythm to the music of the bottles as men built public restrooms and booths for selling the beer. After completing one toilet, a man stepped inside the stall and urinated against the wall of the church.

Two men carried heavy loud speakers and set them beside the church door. Others closed the street with ropes and wooden barriers. Surprised Christians and curious bystanders watched as the strangers worked through the evening. Where had they come from? And why?

At 8 o'clock the following morning, Sunday, groups of elderly people paraded down the street to the front of the church and formed large circles. Kicking their legs and swinging their arms in the air, they began their aerobic exercises. On

the other side of the boulevard, children started playing jump rope and other games. Several people brought tennis racquets and volleyed balls from curb to curb. Many among the merry-makers didn't know how—or why—they had received the new playground, but they delighted in their activities.

Suddenly, a group of men closed the other half of the divided Paseo de Marti with more ropes and barriers. Vendors advanced to the center divider of the boulevard and began giving away free food. Free food is a rarity in a country that still uses ration books to parcel out goods. Who had started this?

Laughing and chatting casually, the vendors opened for business. Long lines formed quickly as they began selling the beer at a fraction of the usual price.

After urinating against the church, some revelers staggered toward the entrance and kneeled. Waving a beer bottle in one hand, they chanted mockingly, "Gracias mi Dios, por El Carnaval Pentecostal de Santiago de Cuba! Que Maravilloso!" ("Thank You my God, for the Pentecostal Carnival of Santiago de Cuba. How marvelous!")

The word *carnival* comes from the Latin word *carne* or *flesh*—an appropriate description of their demonstration. As the carnival reached full swing that morning, the Christians tried to hold their Sunday school class inside the building. Even through the closed doors, the noise was deafening. Hecklers slipped into the sanctuary and scattered

among the worshippers, insulting and making fun of the pastor.

Some of the invaders belonged to the CDR and were neighbors of the believers whom God had healed. Tormented by the knowledge of these healings, one young woman stood angrily and shouted, "We know our doctors secretly healed these people. You can't lie to us. We demand that you tell us the names of these doctors!" One by one, members of the congregation and visitors stood quietly and related how God had healed them of a variety of ailments. With each praise to God, the believers pulled hard on the devil's tail.

The CDR could not keep silent at this insult. The glory must go only to the state, not to God. The carnival outside was not dampening the spirit within the sanctuary. A few of the infiltrators who had mixed with worshippers in the back quickly opened the main doors. The street crowd poured inside.

The revelers, as if on cue, surged toward the front. As the Christians tried to run, children tripped and fell into benches. Pastor Manuel hurriedly opened the side doors of the adjoining garage and parsonage. The congregation streamed in those directions, and the building emptied rapidly.

That afternoon, the Santiago press reported on the carnival and continued to attack the "superstitious" church. Soon even larger crowds began arriving for the free food and cheap beer. The au-

thorities delighted in the hundreds of drunk revelers within the barricaded street. The crowd smashed bottles on the pavement. The nauseous smell of human excrement filled the air as the makeshift toilets overflowed.

The Christians soon outnumbered the mob. God's people and spiritually hungry visitors gathered by the thousands from the city and outer districts. As before, they traveled in old buses rented at great sacrifice. They walked or rode bicycles. They poured around the street barricades and waited in front of the church doors. Although greater in number, they did not retaliate against the mob.

Wearing their best clothes for the special trip, many carried their own parcels of food in paper bags or tied carefully in cloth. Some held worn, pre-revolutionary Bibles. Mothers carried tired, fussing babies. Patiently they stood—old and young, black and white and brown, nearly every occupation and profession—waiting for the doors to open.

Suddenly, someone in the carnival crowd flipped a switch. Conga music blared from speakers strategically placed beside the doors. Party goers began moving among the Christians offering them beer. Sensing the danger and perhaps a trap, the believers huddled together and waited. At 6 p.m. the doors finally opened, and the worshippers began pouring into the "templo."

Seven hundred filled the sanctuary, standing in the aisles and along the back. Others quickly invaded the adjoining garage and stood shoulder

to shoulder. More jammed the balcony, even though the authorities had closed it years ago claiming a "weakening deterioration." The pastor's apartment behind the sanctuary filled as well. With standing room only, the worshippers had to view the service through the connecting open door. The outside doors to the sanctuary also stood open so God's Word would reach the seekers crowding outside.

With sighs of relief, many thanked God for a few minutes to sit down and stuff their belongings under the pews. The loud conga music outside did not disturb their spiritual fervor. Some read their scriptures, allowing others to read with them. Many prayed for the coming service. Others visited with friends or family whom they had not seen for some time.

The atmosphere inside grew warmer with fellowship and greetings. The revelry outside intensified.

Rage of the Turba Divina

At 6:15 as the service was about to begin, the turba divina crashed into the sanctuary. Singing a Cuban revolutionary song, "March of the 26th of July," they quickly divided into three groups.

One group pushed and shoved toward the front while members of their band picked up floor fans and tore out the wires. The second group occupied the back by the main entrance so no one could leave. The third group elbowed its way into the balcony, already perilously full.

As the attackers advanced on the congregation, they kicked believers and beat them with sticks. The hands and arms of their victims swelled from the blows as they tried to protect their heads and faces. Some of the mob began molesting Christian

women and young girls sexually, delighted by their screams. Worshipers turned their faces in horror and disgust as the men in the divine mob exposed themselves.

The turba divina orchestrated its confusion. With shouts and raised clenched fists, they knocked over chairs and climbed the steps to the platform.

"Fidel! Fidel! Long live the Revolution!"

"Down with this superstitious darkness!"

"Nobody will cure nobody here!"

A thin man began destroying the drums with his fists and feet. Others ripped strings from the guitars.

The group which had invaded the balcony intensified the fray with shouts of their own.

"Thank Fidel and the Cuban government who gives us free medicine."

"Only science and medicine can heal!"

Throughout the sanctuary, the mob jeered relentlessly as it continued to smash articles in the church.

"Don't want any superstition!"

"You can't cure by praying and making crosses on your head!"

Several raiders poured beer on banners of Bible verses hanging from the walls.

"Get out of Cuba!"

"We will not allow you to believe in this superstition!"

The believers recognized many of their attackers as plain clothes policemen from the surrounding district.

Soon the marauders swarmed the platform. Old

and young, men and women, they smiled and scoffed triumphantly.

"Long live Fidel!"

"Down with God!"

"Long live free Cuba!"

"Long live the devil!"

"This church is counterrevolutionary."

"You are deceiving the public with these tricks and playing a Yankee imperialist game!"

"Armando Valladares is a conspirator!"

Carlos Gorra Rodríguez, the former revolutionary companion of Castro and now a believer, was standing in the door connecting the pastor's apartment to the sanctuary when the assault began. As the wave of violence poured through the front, he slipped through a side door. *The police should be told about this*, he determined. Running to the 5th Precinct station of the National Revolutionary Police two blocks away, he realized that they had arrested believers from this church four days earlier. He himself had been arrested at the Contramaestre church four weeks earlier. Even so, he hoped they would come to the rescue. This attack was incredible.

Carlos dashed into the office, panting heavily. He rapidly described the attack to a lieutenant sitting behind the desk.

"Please hurry. Stop this disturbance," Carlos urged. "It's a disgrace to the police department!"

The official listened impassively then rose lazily. "You can go back to the church," he waved coolly. "We will send two patrol cars immediately."

None came.

By the time Carlos returned, the turba divina

had embodied the scorn of Satan himself. Several of them were urinating in the aisles. Others squatted along the walls moving their bowels heavy from the free food and beer. The stench mixed with the stuffy air.

Suddenly, several of the mob seized musical instruments which had not been smashed. Playing conga music, they danced back and forth across the front and up the isles, howling like dogs. Bodies swaying with the rhythm, they sang, "Nobody loves anybody." Then, laughing and throwing back their heads, they chanted their sad litany of hopelessness.

"Love has ended. Give us beer. That's what counts."

Not only did they have no hope, they were threatened by the goodness of God. J.B. Phillips wrote, "The insincere man hates and fears the real truth. When this sense of the strength of goodness and love touches a man, whether it be by someone else's life, by something he reads or sees, or by an inner touch in his soul, he is really convicted of sin. He knows that sooner or later the game is up. He suddenly sees that the goodness and love he has despised as weakness are in reality incredibly strong. Self-centered and evil people really fear the good. They express their fear by mockery, cynicism and, when circumstances allow, by active persecution."¹

They continued to sing. Pausing at times to

¹J.B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1976), p. 102.

spit out another declaration, they would thrust their fingers in the faces of those who came to worship. "Get out of here all you believers and religious ones," they cursed, breaths heavy with alcohol. "We only believe in Fidel."

The pulpit in the center of the platform held a perverse attraction for them. Women took turns standing behind it throwing out kisses to the stunned congregation, to "sanctify" them. Laughingly they would shout filthy words and make obscene gestures and movements. As if on cue, men in the dance group paused in front of the pulpit to spit out their one-sentence sermons.

"The only divine thing here is Fidel."

"You have to be stupid and ignorant to believe in divine healing."

One drew himself importantly behind the pulpit and began in mock oration, "Fidel taught us culture, education, liberty and the law. He gives us medicine. God doesn't save anybody . . . the only one who saves is Fidel!"

Finishing his discourse, he climbed onto the pulpit and jumped up and down on it, as if to frighten the goodness of God out of the wood. Following his tirade, others attacked the pulpit with beer mugs and bottles and sticks, yelling obscenities. A reveler swinging a bottle broke off the carved wooden Bible attached on top of the pulpit. As he swung, the nails which had held the Bible to the pulpit cut him several times.

This incident reminds us of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal recorded in the Old Testament. Elijah challenged them to decide who was God, Jehovah or Baal.

They . . . called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made.

And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened."

So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.²

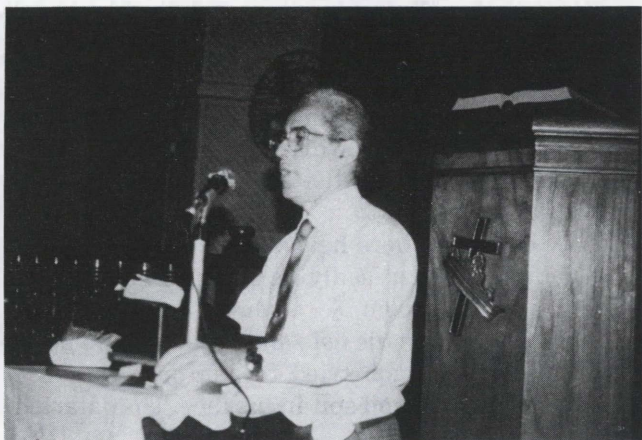
Who were the victors in the church in Santiago this day? The sad drunks, filled with alcohol and Marxist milk, chanting their bleak religious theme of "Fidel, Fidel"? Or the meek believers who never struck or spit back at their attackers, but returned blessings for cursing?

Carlos glanced at his watch. 6:50 p.m. The police still had not arrived. He slipped out of the sanctuary again, this time with Pastor Manuel. Both ran to the police station looking for help. Manuel had called the police several times on the telephone, but to no avail.

The screaming and music inside the sanctuary blended with the carnival clamor outside as they crossed the street in the darkness. Propelled by frustration, they sprinted the two blocks to the station. The same officer sat behind the desk. Again he told them to return to the church.

"We will not send two, but three police cars!" he taunted.

²1 Kings 18:26-28 (NKJV).



Pastor Manuel Gonzalez Dotres conducting a service at the church in Santiago de Cuba. This picture was taken a year before the attacks. Note the wooden Bible on the pulpit behind him.

Frustrated by the lieutenant's empty promises, Carlos and Manuel saw no use in standing helplessly in front of him. They flung open the door and hurried back to the church. The deafening furor continued in the sanctuary as they stole into the parsonage by the street door.

After seeing to the pastor's safety, Carlos suddenly thought of Joaquín Robet. Although Joaquín had been arrested a few days earlier, he had returned to the services. Carlos sensed his need of help and hurried through the parsonage into the sanctuary, fighting the tide of Christians trying to escape. Now the mob was tearing the curtains off the windows. He sidestepped a man

kicking an accordion across the floor, smashing the bellows beyond repair.

Members of the turba divina surrounded Joaquín, threatening, pushing and hitting him. Carlos motioned to a few Christian brothers to help. They pushed through the attackers and led Joaquín up the stairs to a small room off the now empty balcony. There he would be safe.

Joaquín listened sadly as strange music from below filled the room. A revolutionary was banging the piano with his fists and breaking the keys. Another in the mob tried to stop him, but the "pianist" laughed and spit in his face. They started arguing.

Frustrated that they had nothing left to smash, the turba divina began yelling, "Where is the pastor? He is a witch doctor!" They searched through the crowd and up in the balcony. "We must kill the witch doctor. We must cut him into four pieces!"

Pastor Manuel knew early in the evening that the mob intended to beat and hang him. A new Christian who had found God a few days earlier had warned him. The attackers had confided in the new believer not realizing that he had left the Communist Party. Except for his trip to the police station, Manuel hid in his parsonage during the assault.

Meanwhile, some of the believers managed to abandon the church. In retaliation, the mob stood on the empty seats and began stomping. The leader stormed to the pulpit and grabbed the microphone. When a Christian woman standing there tried to pull it back from him, he hit her in

the face. The blow knocked her down. With firm deliberation, he began to read a communiqué.

"The policy and position of the state about fanatic religion is to deal with it strongly and face to face," he intoned loudly. "The determination of the Party and the government is to not permit these things under the wicked flags of obscurantism . . ."

During the long speech, a believer discovered two large cans of gasoline with rags and matches outside the front doors. In the confusion around him, he managed to take them away.

"Religion," the preacher of communism continued, "cannot continue to suggest that the people separate themselves from scientific medicine and the atheist reality. This work already constitutes a counterrevolutionary act in favor of Yankee imperialism. It is a fable of the Christians that they will go to heaven to a glorious paradise. This does not exist. All of us are going to hell. It is the only thing that really exists in this world."

Finishing his address, he ripped the cables out of the last working microphone. Another man carried the amplifier out of the building.

Carlos returned to the police station for the third time about 7:30 p.m. This time the police were ready for him. The lieutenant now stood in the center of the room beside a captain and the notorious Lieutenant Colonel Cerra. Each had dressed in military uniforms.

Several pastors had had contact with Cerra when he was a corporal in the forced labor camp on the Isle of Pines in the 1960s. A stocky, mus-

cular guard, Cerra frequently kicked and stabbed his prisoners. He had beaten the Baptist missionary David Fite and Adventist preacher Noble Alexander as they planted and picked oranges in the mosquitos and hot sun.

In charge of Brigades 15 and 24, Cerra had killed Christians and political prisoners when they tired of swinging twenty-four pound sledge hammers in the rock quarries. He loved to threaten, "I will beat you up to the whites of your eyes." Often he strolled through the cell blocks smoothly asking questions of the prisoners to find new reasons to beat them. As a reward for his faithful service to the State of Cuba, his superiors had promoted him to lieutenant colonel.

Angry, Carlos did not hold back. "You are responsible!" he accused Cerra. "You are responsible for leaving the women and children of the church in danger. They could be killed! If there is one victim, it will be your fault. You must stop this disturbance!"

Cerra and the captain glared in silence. The lieutenant who had twice promised the police cars, smiled craftily.

"But you see," he explained as if talking to a child, "we can't enter the church building without authorization from the pastor. Where is he?"

Carlos' eyes narrowed to tiny slits. "I will tell Colonel Mario Garcia, Chief of the PNR, about this farce." Jabbing his finger at them, he accused, "You are violating our human rights."

Cerra, his face red with anger, stepped forward. He had beaten Baptists, Adventists and Catho-

lics. Perhaps tonight he could add a Pentecostal to his list.

"Do you know what you are saying?" he demanded hotly.

"Yes!" Carlos shot. "The ones who don't know what they are doing are you . . . the police. Everyone knows of these violations, which you take for granted and justify. You continue to sanctify these attacks by your diabolical acts."

The three officials shrugged. "We can't enter the church without written permission from the pastor. So, the pastor will have to order these people to leave the church."

Carlos continued to press. "But Pastor Dotres is hiding in the parsonage. They want to kill him. They tried to burn the church!"

The men who had helped organize the carnival and attack said nothing. Calmed, Cerra spoke again, choosing his words skillfully. He left the clubs to the others down the street. "Now the pastor and members of the church should go inside the church building," he smiled, slowly smoothing back his straight black hair. "They should take out those who are disturbing the peace, because the pastor is responsible for what happens inside the building."

"No!" Carlos bravely insisted. "The Party and State Security directed these attacks. *They* are responsible."

The other two officers looked questioningly at the lieutenant colonel. Cerra folded his arms and presented the state's position.

"We will try to intervene so nothing further

will happen, but we really can't restrict the public." He paused. "They have a legitimate right to protest."

The state's condemning newspaper articles, the barricades, the beer, the toilets—these he called the will of the public.

Cerra furrowed his eyebrows in mock concern and continued. "This divine healing irritates the public. And when the public is irritated, it is really not our place to intervene."

His anger rising before this panel of political Pharisees, Carlos demanded, "Who is in command here anyway? The leaders of the state, or delinquents? You of the Security Police might come to intervene, but you are the same ones who direct that divine mob of atheists."

The officers controlled their obvious rage as if part of a larger predetermined plan. "You must leave now," they demanded. "We may come to help, but you Christians must reestablish the public order in the church."

Carlos, never the coward, whirled in the doorway and glared at them. "Like Christians, we will restore things by praying. We have not attacked anyone. We did not start this cruel disturbance."

He raced back up the street, tears of pain and frustration coursing down his cheeks.

In the church office, meanwhile, a believer named Leopordito had picked up the telephone to call church leaders in Havana. While he talked, the mob hammered on the door, which he had blocked with a chair. Leopordito rapidly explained, "They beat us . . . smashed the piano

... molested the women..." Suddenly, the attackers broke through the door. One jerked the phone out of Leopordito's hand and, pushing him aside, covered his mouth. Stinking of sweat and alcohol, another laughed into the phone, "We are so sorry to disturb you, brother," he lied piously, posing as a Christian. "This was only a joke!"

Christians across the city rallied in shock when they learned of the attack. When news reached the First and Third Baptist Churches, they immediately stopped their services and began praying for the Christians on Paseo de Marti.

After his meeting, Pastor Samuel Entenza Reguera of the First Baptist Church, headed directly across town to help his Pentecostal brothers. Finding the attack still in progress, he slipped around to the side door of the parsonage and asked for Pastor Manuel Dotres. Members of the congregation guarding the door quickly passed the word inside. Manuel appeared in the doorway. Hands clasped in the darkness.

"You must leave here. It's not safe," Pastor Reguera cautioned. In the background the mob chanted a filthy poem about the pastor and the church. "Come with me. Hurry!"

Pastor Dotres, with his wife and children, fled through the side door and to the safety of the First Baptist Church. There, Manuel and his family recounted the horrors of the morning and evening. Pastor Reguera, director of Eastern Baptist Seminary and well known in Christian circles, picked up his phone and dialed. He determined to report this incident to Rev. Raul Suárez R., a fel-



Baptist Pastor Samuel Reguera Entenza on the far right. His wife on the left.

low Baptist and head of the Ecumenical Council in Cuba.

A liberationist minister, Suárez had represented the Cuban government for the Ecumenical Churches of Cuba in Geneva. There, he had said that Cuba respects human rights.

Pastor Reguera came to the point immediately when Suárez answered. "There have been barbarous acts here," he concluded after explaining

the situation. "Devoted believers have come by the thousands to receive the Word of God and divine healing. But they have encountered a blaspheming mob trying to burn down the church and kill the pastor."

Four hours had gone by since the attack began. Now, while he spoke, the marauders were finishing their rampage.

"Who lives?" a revolutionary shouted.

"Fidel!" the crowd chanted in unison.

"Long live Fidel."

"Down with Christ!"

The mob closed their "meeting" with another filthy poem.

"This abominable act makes a falsehood of what you said in Geneva," Pastor Reguera warned. "This shows that we are not equal before the law because these Pharisees assaulted the temple. They enjoyed their shameful, base conduct. The attackers said they had 'all authority' behind their actions. The police did not help to reestablish the peace or public order. They did nothing to prevent injury or damages, which was their duty. The police closed their ears and eyes to calls for help and mercy!"

Reguera challenged Suárez to report this incident personally to Carneado, the Minister of Religion, who could stop "these drunken, horrible, disgusting acts."

Fifteen minutes after Carlos returned from his confrontation with Cerra, the destroyers arrived posing as saviors. The attacks had begun several hours earlier. Their police station was only two

blocks away. With them came Justino, Chief of the Provincial Registry, and Juan José García Rimbla, the Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Justice. Secretly delighted over this miserable scene, Rimbla had kept his promise to David Castillo of Contramaestre a few weeks earlier. "The next time the CDR and the town will assault your church and tear it apart."

When their car pulled up beside the parsonage in the back of the church, most of the attackers had gone, their destruction complete. The impressive, polished group filed into the apartment. Suddenly, one of the raiders still inside the sanctuary kicked the door open. The door smashed against the forehead of Carlos' little girl, knocking her to the floor. Carlos quickly carried her to the sofa and began to pray as a large bump swelled on her face.

Cerra stalked through the open door and grabbed a hostile woman. With great show, he marched her off to the Precinct without knowing whether she had kicked the door. At the station, he promptly released her.

The authorities arrested a token group of the attackers. But in a final mockery, the pastor of the church had to sign a document stating that he had given them permission to enter the temple and establish order.

After the assault on the Santiago church, a man walked up to the building and met Pastor Dotres. "Has the One who heals left the church?"

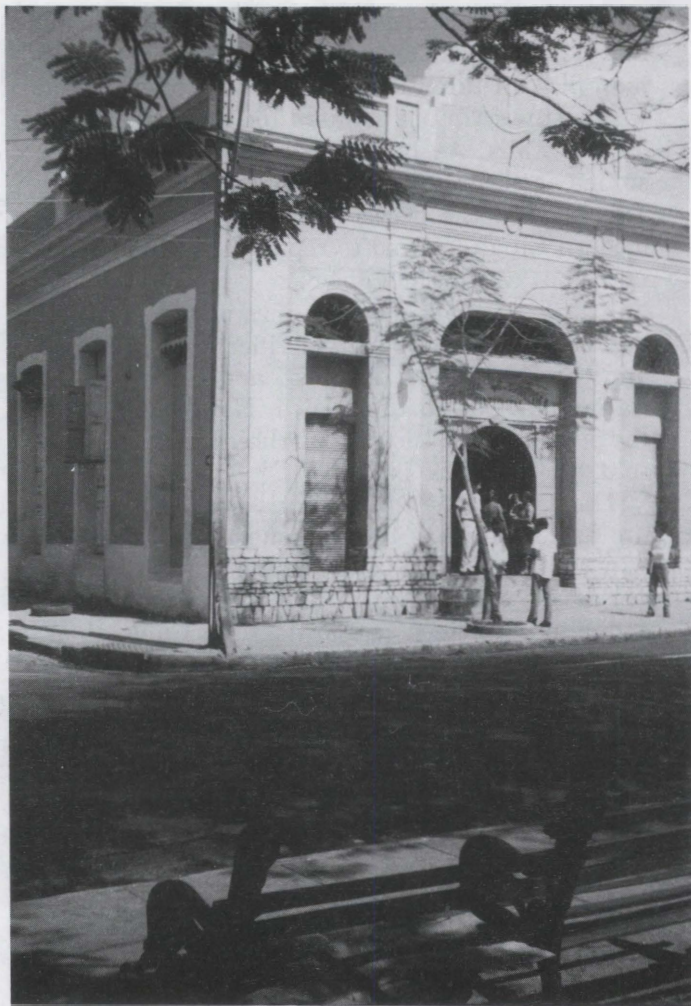
Manuel smiled. "No, the One who heals is still here. His name is Jesus."

Then Manuel turned to help mop up the urine and liquor off the church floor, and clean the human filth off the walls. Some of the congregation washed the scripture banners and hung them back on the walls. As he washed a wall, the pastor smiled at the group working and singing together. There, amid the desecration of God's temple, a modern Elijah labored to repair "the altar of the Lord that was broken down."

In the prophet's day, "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all of the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'the Lord, He is God!'"³

The rage of the turba divina could not silence the praise of God's living stones. It took eleven days to clean and repair the church. On the twelfth day, services began again. During the month and a half of meetings in Santiago de Cuba, thousands of souls received Jesus Christ as their Savior—more than three hundred people a day. Many others were profoundly changed. In Maffo, Contramaestre and other cities, additional hundreds entered the kingdom, proving that the shadow of a dog cannot bite.

³1 Kings 18:30, 38-39 (NKJV).



The church in Santiago de Cuba where thousands received Jesus Christ during meetings which lasted a month and a half.

The Marxist Muzzle

Pouring over the documents in my lap aboard the Pan Am flight, I felt saddened over the stranglehold that Castro's oppressors have on Cuban society. Their attempts to restrain Christians go beyond the church. The Marxist muzzle covers believers educationally, politically and legally as well.

Sometime ago Cuba's Minister of Education, José Llanuza inspected schools for their ideological purity. He chose a classroom at random, surprising both students and teacher.

"Those of you who believe in God, please raise your hands," he ordered calmly during his questioning. Most of the students reponded. Shocked, the official severely reprimanded the teacher for her failure to educate the students properly.

Cuba now has a new Minister of Education, José Ramón Fernández. During a recent speech in Mexico City, he declared, "The teacher is the framer of the most advanced ideas of the Revolution and is a Communist Party activist wherever he is found." The story of Alejandro illustrates how this activism works even at the youngest level.

A first grader, Alejandro left for school one morning excited about his new world. At school that day he sat with his friends and delighted in his teacher, a professional who easily related to the children. Standing at the front that morning, she kindly asked the children to lift their hands if they believed in God. Alejandro happily raised his hand as did a few of his friends.

At recess the teacher asked those who raised their hands to stay behind. She assigned them to a special row, and for the entire year taught them lessons on the non-existence of God. Furious, Alejandro's mother went to the school. The teacher said the lessons were part of the state curriculum.

Gladys Saenz is another example. She applied to attend the Lenin School, a prestigious college prep school in Havana. She could attend, but on one condition.

"Gladys is an extraordinary girl," the director told her father, Dr. Braulio Saenz. "She has a superb record that entitles her to go to this school. But Gladys has a problem: She goes to church on Sundays. Students at the Lenin School cannot involve themselves in religious expressions. She might believe in God, but she cannot attend church and go to the Lenin."

He paused for his words to sink in, then turned to Gladys. "You know, my dear, if you go to the Lenin, you will have great prestige. You might even earn a scholarship to study in East Germany, perhaps the Soviet Union!"

Not willing to sacrifice her faith, Gladys chose to continue in her neighborhood junior high school.

School officials have reproached students for wearing a cross on a chain around their necks, claiming that this is "conducting religious propaganda." Although many teachers do not openly attack a student's beliefs, they make jokes about them and encourage other students to do so as well. The high school director in the Province of Granma, for example, ridiculed a Christian student by saying, "Poor thing, she is the daughter of a pastor."

Children who accept Christ and mention this at their local school often are placed in *pupilo potestades*, state-run schools with room and board. Away from their families, they learn the religion of Marx and Lenin instead. I refer not to communism under Stalin during the "bad old days." I speak of *now*.

All the Christian camps in Cuba are closed. In their place the government has created atheist "escuelas del campo" or country schools. Once a year the government requires all children to study communism for two weeks in these schools. Young people who do not conform to their teachings become outcasts.

Communist activism against Christian students reaches the university level as well. Heriberto Ortiz Jr. is typical of those who suffer. He

wanted to study law at the University of Havana. Even though his scores were higher than many others, officials refused to admit him because of his faith. The leader of the Student Union at the university reflected the school's attitude. "Religious people have to be thrown out of the university," he asserted. "But first we have to find some other non-religious excuse to expel them."

In the face of these obstacles, the candles of the saints still glow in the darkness.

South of the main island of Cuba lies the Isle of Pines, also called the Isle of Youth. Formerly a concentration camp for religious and political prisoners, the thirty-mile-wide island is the Communist answer to Christian youth camps. According to a recent broadcast by Havana radio, Uganda President Yoweri K. Museveni visited the island. There he witnessed the Marxist revolutionary indoctrination of 100,000 young Africans and Nicaraguans.

The son of Pastor Onelio Gonzáles Figueredo was drafted into the Cuban military and sent to the Isle of Youth. Together, they faced this great challenge. Believing "one plus God equals a majority," the son decided to evangelize the Communist evangelizers. Although the military strictly forbids such activity, he secretly spread the gospel among the Cuban, Nicaraguan and African youth on the island. His father helped. With no printing equipment, he typed Christian leaflets for his son to distribute.

One story which deeply moved these young people related how Vanya, a Russian soldier, was

brutally murdered because of his Christian witness in the Soviet army. The Russian authorities said that he had drowned. When his parents opened his sealed casket, however, they found his beaten and stabbed body.

By night, Pastor Onelio copied the story on his typewriter, laboriously typing each line. By day his son would distribute the leaflet. As a result, many recieved the Lord.

Onelio and his son paid a dear price for their witness, however. Spiritually hungry young people frequently visited their home to learn more about God. Posing as a Christian, one young man took special interest in their work. Often visiting their home, he read all the scriptures, leaflets and stories Onelio typed. After some months, however, the informer brought the police. They arrested Onelio and took him to prison in Maffo.

Furious that someone had penetrated their Communist training ground on the Isle of Youth, the authorities forced church officials to withdraw the pastor's credentials. Soon after, the Figueredos were forced out of Cuba and moved to Ecuador.

The Africans and Nicaraguans who receive their education on the Isle of Youth return home with something far more dangerous than guns. They become unwitting bearers of darkness.

In an excellent reference work compiled by Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, one can find the satanic poetry and dramas written by Karl Marx.¹

¹Richard Wurmbrand, *Marx & Satan* (Westchester, Il.: Crossway Books, 1986), pp. 13-19.

One of Marx' dramas, entitled *Oulanem* reveals the depth of this darkness:

If there is a Something which devours,
I'll leap within it, though I bring the
world to ruins—

The world which bulks between me
and the abyss

I will smash to pieces with my
enduring curses.

I'll throw my arms around its harsh reality,
Embracing me, the world will dumbly
pass away,

And then sink down to utter nothingness,
Perished, with no existence—that would be
really living.

How different from the glorious prophecy of Jesus Christ found in the book of Isaiah!

"I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house . . ." ²

I have tried not to mention other nations in this book as I did not wish to dilute its focus. However, since youth from Nicaragua are trained in Cuba, allow me to mention one incident which shows the spread of the unseen war.

Most of the professors and teachers in Nicaragua either left or were expelled after the San-

²Isaiah 42:6, 7 (NKJV).

dinistas came to power. Those who remain are Marxists first and educators second.

One day a thirteen-year-old boy came home from school, happy with his new assignment. The class was to write a report about three men whose lives had benefitted mankind. The boy wrote a long article about Albert Einstein, Louis Pasteur and Jesus Christ.

As the teacher passed out the marked papers the next week, the boy was dismayed. He had done excellent work, but the teacher gave him no credit. He walked up to her desk and asked her for an explanation.

"In our new Nicaragua," she explained coldly, "there are only three correct answers: Marx, Engels and Lenin."

The stress on Cuba's children never lets up. The political muzzle makes it difficult and costly for them to attend church. State-sponsored school picnics, sports events and weekend trips all take place on Sunday. In a free society, these voluntary activities draw many weak people away from worship, but in Cuba the programs are designed to steal or poison the faith of its young. Teachers attend these functions and take roll. They punish students who do not attend.

These pressures affect traditional holidays as well. In 1969 Castro announced that Christmas was a "European tradition" that "slows the harvest of the sugar cane." He replaced the holiday with a July 26 celebration called the Day of the Children to observe his historical attack on the Moncada police station.

Glasnost contains areas of deception. Western Christians do not realize that glasnost covers only six percent of the world under Communist rule. On April 4, 1989, bulldozers destroyed the unregistered Baptist church building in Rostov-on-Don, Ukraine, Soviet Union. There is no permission to rebuild destroyed church buildings. Despite the relaxing of tensions between East and West, the Marxist muzzle still fits snugly over the oppressed. Christians still are not able to freely print their own literature. Ten thousand copies of the New Testament in the Moldavian language have recently been destroyed. Eighty thousand large sheets of paper for Bible printing were confiscated near Kharkov in the Ukraine. They were burned in 1989. The religious hierarchy frequently joins hands with the oppressors, even in the distribution of Bibles.

Under glasnost, for example, certain groups have shipped large quantities of Bibles to Moscow. In November of 1988 news reached the West that, although Christians were receiving Bibles, many were angry. This sounded incredible since they had waited many years to receive God's Word. The believers were justifiably upset. The two main organizations which received the Bibles were the All-Union Council of Baptists and the Russian Orthodox Church. These groups were selling the Bibles for forty rubles each, a month's wages for most Soviets. Church leaders claimed they had to sell the Bibles to meet traveling expenses for Christian guests from the West. However, these guests paid their own expenses.

Another organization sent sixty thousand Bibles to Romania through official channels. The church rejoiced amid handshakes and much publicity for the benefit of religious magazines in the West. After its official smile, however, the Romanian government ground the Bibles into toilet paper.

One afternoon a Christian brother in Bucharest sat in his bathroom pulling out the toilet paper. He noticed tiny black letters broken and mixed on the paper. Psalms . . . Exodus . . . Matthew . . . The government had not ground the paper fine enough to destroy all the words.

While traveling in Argentina, I met colonies of Russian-speaking Mennonites. I learned that thousands of Bibles received by churches through official channels in the Soviet Union had later been confiscated and shipped to Argentina for sale.

Bibles in Cuba also mysteriously disappear. One day a Russian truck rolled slowly into a sugar mill, squeaking and groaning under its heavy cargo. The mill foreman stopped talking with his assistant as he observed the strange load packed tightly on the truck bed.

"There must be some mistake," he mumbled. "What would I do with hundreds of small boxes?"

Noticing the Volga following the truck, he stepped curiously over to the car and tapped on the window. The driver stopped briefly and rolled it down. The little card in the palm of his hand said everything. G-2. Internal Security Police. The foreman needed no explanation; none was given.

The truck parked beside huge steel grinders. A

worker threw the switch and the drums spun to life with a deafening roar. Four soldiers began unloading the truck. As they emptied the boxes into the teeth, the whirling blades ripped and ground and chewed the contents into sweet pulp—but not sugar cane. This sweetness was of a richer nature. The machine was shredding the words of truth, of light, of love, of compassion. Of God.

The G-2 fed 100,000 Bibles into this hungry mouth that day.

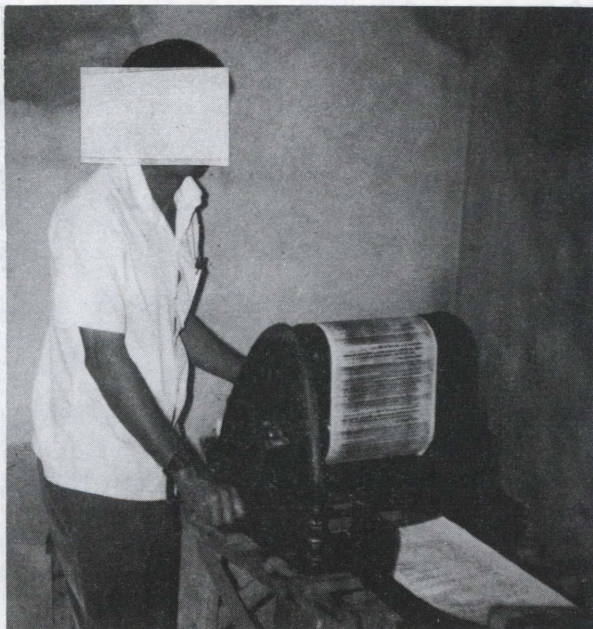
Nothing has changed. Dr. Herbert Caudill, a Baptist pastor living in Cuba at the time, reported many similar incidents. The government has routinely destroyed Bibles and other Christian literature. Noble Alexander and many others tell of the burning of 27,000 Bibles in a Havana warehouse. This took place after officials distributed three thousand copies, along with the smiles and appropriate photos, for the benefit of western Christians. In ancient times Christians burned evil scrolls.³ In Havana, the evil burn Christian Bibles.

In the past 31 years, Cuba has permitted 10,000 Bibles to enter the country. This averages about one per day since the Revolution. These Bibles are given only to churches of the Ecumenical Council.

Cuban law is another instrument of the Marxist political muzzle. Anything you write or say that differs with G-2 policy can land you in prison.

According to the law, Cuban citizens must fore-

³Acts 19:18, 19.



This old hand operated printer has produced hymnals, Bible studies and Sunday school materials. Quantities of paper must be carefully purchased to avoid police action.

go the observance of holy days when they coincide with work or patriotic celebrations. Cuba now has a patriotic celebration lasting exactly one week to celebrate the victory at the Bay of Pigs: *La Semana de Giron*. This observance, by law, takes precedence over the celebration of Easter. The coincidence of these dates is a direct, planned attack to keep Christians from honoring or re-



These few Christian books have been preserved for more than thirty years and kept in a home. There are no Christian bookstores in Cuba.

membering the week of the triumphal entry, death, and resurrection of Christ.

What are the civil consequences of this spiritual war? Parents who decide to keep their children at home to observe religious holidays risk imprisonment from three to nine months under two provisions of the Penal Code: Article 247 (abuse of religious freedom) and Article 365 (acts contrary to the normal development of minors,

inducing minors to refuse to fulfill educational work). Article 365 sounds harmless, even beneficial. However, the Article and other laws are mixed, used, and misused to lay traps for believers.

Glycerin is harmless, as is nitrogen. Tourists and casual religious observers visiting Communist countries glimpse these elements in separate bottles. Mixed, however, they form nitroglycerin, an explosive. Christians who live in these countries must daily face the mixture.

George Orwell's novel, *1984*, describes a police state in which neighbors spy and inform on each other. So it is under Cuba's repressive muzzle.

One can easily see how the CDR could mobilize so quickly against the church in Santiago de Cuba. In a July 1988 interview, the chief of the CDR of Santiago Province affirmed, "There are a total of



Street scene in Havana. Note police officer walking by on left.

637,000 members of this organization in the city of Santiago de Cuba." This represents one person in every three. In October of 1988, Cuban Radio Rebelde announced that the National Revolutionary Police (PNR) has made available three telephone numbers so citizens can "anonymously denounce persons who are engaged in antisocial activities." Whenever it chooses, the CDR can mobilize its hundreds of thousands of members by telephone.

What do the PNR and the CDR consider antisocial?

Red Sunday is a day of construction and agriculture work for the entire population. Cubans celebrate the event on the first Sunday in November in memory of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. On this day in 1988, the government ordered the CDR to "redouble your vigilance" against antisocial people who did not participate in the work. Namely Christians.

On the 28th anniversary of the CDR, the national headquarters of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution circulated a document among its members, noting "the necessity to combat the manifestations of discontent, pessimism, and negative attitudes." The CDR document exhorted its members to "redouble revolutionary vigilance and combat readiness."

Gustavo Guevara Medina, provincial coordinator of the CDR in Holguin said in an interview on Cuban radio, "Another of the most important aspects of this work has been to strengthen our revolutionary vigilance and combativeness of the

masses to know how to cope with the manifestations of social indiscipline."

The CDR has divided cities throughout Cuba into many zones to accomplish this task. Havana, for example, is mapped into 1,303 areas. Matanzas is organized into 247. Gabriel Alpízar Rojas, CDR coordinator in Matanzas, informed the press recently that the vigilance there focuses on "preventive social work." According to the news report, in this province "there are over 2,000 CDR on full alert with 112,000 members in reserve for combat."

What combat?

The CDR is not an armed National Guard. It does not repel foreign invaders. Its members are families on each block who spy on their neighbors, copy automobile license numbers of visitors to nearby homes, and inform on secret church meetings.

The Cuban regime is investing heavily in its brainwashing of children and young people. More than half the population of Cuba are children of the Revolution. The latest statistics show that 40 per cent of Cubans are less than 16 years old; 65 per cent less than thirty.

The state publication, *The Politics of Programming for Radio and Television* recently called for an emphasis on Marxist indoctrination programs. "We must guide the children using the lives of Communists who have fought in all parts of the world for the ideology of the working class," the publication urged. Its instructions for elaborate children's programming reveals that the political



This man stands in front of a government sign which states "Socialism Transforms Our Life". The girl wears a communist youth scarf. Someone has torn off her nose.

system is intensifying its fight against religious ideas. Contrary to statements by the official press—and Fidel's own speeches—about religious tolerance, antireligious programs occupy a primary place with precise goals.

The text of these objectives states: "In the thesis of our ideological war, it is expressed that the conception of the world and nature which our Party and its militants teach is scientific and excludes any religious or mystical interpretation with natural, social or human phenomena. This is the conception which we must offer the children."

The article addresses the problem of "ideolog-

ical wanderings" among youth. It discusses the reinforcement of Communist morals, international proletarianism, loyalty to the Party and Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the need to fight against the weaknesses of the past.

The fight gravitates toward any religious activity. Where there is no activity, there is no fight.

In this spiritual and ideological war, dedicated Cuban Christians do not run from combat. Armed with the love of God, they resist steadfastly, pulling the devil's tail in the name of their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Wheat and Tares

"We will find our greatest success to the extent that we inculcate Marxism as a kind of religion.

Religious men and women are easy to convert and win, and so will easily accept our thinking if we wrap it up in a kind of religious terminology."

—Lenin

The flight from Zurich was long and tiring. Glancing at my watch, I realized we were about to land in New York. *Better shave*, I sighed.

I quickly gathered my documents and news clippings and stuffed them back into my attache case. Unbuckling my seatbelt, I rose and stretched, then made my way toward the restrooms in the tail.

Waiting for a vacancy, I pondered our Lord's parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13. "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field," Jesus said. "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had

sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared."

Cuban believers are a suffering people, dominated by political and religious leaders committed to destroying the Christian church. Like the tares, communists cannot hide their fierce resistance to active forms of Christianity. Even the misguided attempts of certain North American church officials to cover up the persecution has failed.

The tare closely resembles real wheat. If eaten, however, the grains of this plant produce convulsions and even death. Through the Department of Religious Affairs, communists skillfully plant such tares among the wheat by deciding which pastors will officially represent the Cuban church.

The director of the Religious Affairs office, José Felipe Carneado, also is a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. He makes all major decisions involving church growth and witness. The government is not ignorant of this religious farce. Although he is an atheist, his friends in the office jokingly call him "Monseñor Carneado."

Carneado proudly claims, "Castro never had an anti-Christian viewpoint." Promoting Liberation Theology to form a perverted social gospel, he ignores the illustration of Mary and Martha recorded in Luke 10:40-42. Here Jesus emphasizes that spiritual food has priority over physical provision.

The subtle religious poisoning of Liberation Theology permeates every area of Cuban life. As Minister of Religion, Carneado said in *Cuba In-*

ternational, "The differences of opinion about the existence of heaven and paradise are less important than the immediate and concrete task of socialist construction." He continually calls for "normalization between believers and unbelievers" and demands that Christians become more "socially responsible." This atheist pope's socialist construction wishes the destruction of the church.



On this small shelf is an entire private seminary library used by many pastors. The few official seminaries teach Marxist Theology.

The Baptist Church in Marianao, for example, had more than a hundred dedicated members. Carneado's office forced out the older Bible-believing pastor and appointed Rev. Raúl Suárez R. He began defending the Revolution and preaching about Marxist-Christian dialogs. By 1982, all but ten of the congregation had left.

As the devastated congregation slowly began to rebuild under his social gospel, Suárez was named president of the Ecumenical Council of Cuba.

In April of 1988, three weeks after the attacks on the churches in Santiago Province, the Cuban government financed a trip to Cuba for U.S. Congressmen, businessmen, professors and writers. They had dinner with Suárez their first evening in Cuba. He smoothly explained that the church lacked believers because of the mass exodus of Christians in 1958. He did not mention the fifty Baptist pastors of western Cuba whom authorities arrested, beat and imprisoned in 1965. Nor did he talk about the cancellation of all Christian radio and television programs. He referred to the government-church problems as "impositions."

A member of the visiting delegation, Dr. Sharon Georgianna, asked Suárez later that evening if she could visit a Seventh Day Adventist or Pentecostal church. "I'm not sure that's possible," he lied. "But I'll take you to my church Sunday." He never picked her up.

Dr. Georgianna did not accept purely official word about the Cuban church. Speaking to believers and other pastors, she learned of the at-

tacks on the churches in Maffo, Contramaestre and Santiago de Cuba the month before. She represents one more example of the "grassroots Christian" who is wise as a serpent.

This same year, Fidel Castro told Denton Lotz, secretary of the World Baptist Alliance, "All educated people should read the Bible." Lotz offered to send fifty thousand Bibles to Cuba. Castro slyly told Lotz that he should check with the Ecumenical Council, then Suárez and the Ecumenical Council refused. Again, the poisonous tares choke the church.

How can atheistic Communists and ecumenical pastors work together? The apostle Paul wrote, "When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person (new man) inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!"¹ With Liberation Theology these leaders have redefined the "new man."

God's Word teaches that the "new man" is liberated from sin by the atonement of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This spiritual cleansing answers the greed and corruption which plagues mankind, both rich and poor.

Cuban liberationists shift the focus of this spiritual cleansing. Their "new man" redeems himself through acts of liberation. Using violence if necessary, these acts stem from Marxist economic theory to bring about an earthly political kingdom of God.

The Cuban government eagerly embraces this

¹2 Corinthians 5:17 (TLB).

theology. Optimistic observers call this "Cuba's new attitude toward the church." In 1984 Fidel Castro boasted, "Liberation Theology is doing more to promote revolutionary change in Latin America than all the millions of books on Marxism."

Suárez is a member of the World Council of Churches, a leading voice for Liberation Theology. World Council Secretary Emilio Castro (no relation to Fidel) says, "God works through Marxist revolution in order to bring all men together."

Canaan Banana, a Methodist and former World Council official, said, "Every time I see a guerilla, I see Jesus Christ." Marxist guerrillas inspired by Jesus? Marx wrote satanic poetry. His son, Edgar, saw Marx as a demon.²

As I thought of this while shaving on the plane, pieces of the religious puzzle began to fall into place. Atheists, Marxists, Liberationists, all argue that the "new man" can solve the problem of sin and injustice in the world without the help of a personal God.

Lenin, the father of communism, foretold this blending of atheistic and Christian philosophies. "We will find our greatest success to the extent that we inculcate Marxism as a kind of religion," he said. "Religious men and women are easy to convert and win, and so will easily accept our thinking if we wrap it up in a kind of religious terminology."

The apostle Paul saw this coming two thousand

²Wurmbrand, *Marx & Satan*, p. 47.

years before. "The time will come," he wrote, "when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."³

For those who desire to follow Christ, the picture of Liberation Theology is grim indeed. The Marxists are saying, "You Christians should create an oil which will mix with our water." Some Marxist pastors and liberal Christians try to do that. But the oil of the Holy Spirit and the water of philosophy and dialog do not blend.

Lest we despair, let us remember where the seat of true government endures.

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;
and the government will be upon His shoulder. And
His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and peace there
will be no end . . .⁴

Finishing my shave, I returned to my seat to rest for the remaining moments of the flight. My mind, however, continued to race. Among the documents in my attache case was a report from Rev. Florentino Toirac. He had returned to Cuba in 1988 with his two brothers Eliseo and Rafael in a special delegation. Pastors and missionaries born and raised in Cuba, they had served under

³2 Timothy 4:3, 4 (NIV).

⁴Isaiah 9:6, 7 (NKJV).

Baptist and evangelical mission boards in Cuba and Haiti. They carried with them Bibles to distribute during their tour. The copies they had packed in their luggage passed inspection. The government took the other Bibles and placed them in the hands of the Ecumenical Council.

The evening of their arrival, the Toirac brothers met with Carneado and his Cabinet for more than two hours. Carneado seemed friendly and mentioned Florentino's gospel radio broadcasts, which he beamed into Cuba by shortwave from the powerful transmitters of Trans World Radio.

Seizing the moment, Florentino offered to send 20,000 Bibles to Cuba. Carneado turned and looked at the rest of his Cabinet. "We accept!" he smiled.

After the meeting, Florentino walked over to the members of the Council to discuss this apparent opening for the Word of God. "That's too many Bibles," they shrugged. "We know the needs of the churches here, and we can't possibly use that many in 1989."

Florentino was distressed. Surely they had heard the government's acceptance! Was this a game?

The Toirac brothers appealed to the president of the Council, scheduling a meeting for later that week. A short, balding man with a kind face, Suárez entered their hotel wearing a cool tropical shortsleeved shirt and a jacket. He sided with the Council.

"We can't possibly use more than four thousand Bibles in 1989," he frowned. "Never more than three or four thousand Bibles a year!"

Florentino and his brothers listened in dismay. In a nation of more than ten million people, their spiritual leaders wanted only one Bible for every 2,500 persons!

In his report, Florentino related the story of a Christian woman who walked twenty-five miles one way over mountains to receive a Bible from the brothers. "She took the Bible emotionally, pressed it against her chest and fell on her knees, weeping, thanking God for it," Florentino said. "She had prayed for twelve years for one."

He also tells of a pastor who traveled about four hundred miles by train, bus and on foot to receive a Bible. His old Bible was dilapidated with many pages missing.

As the Toirac brothers prepared to board their flight out of Cuba, the supervisor of the airport approached them. "Are you the Mr. Toirac who has "The Way of Life" radio program?" he asked Florentino.

"Yes."

"Could you please find me a Bible?" the supervisor pled. "I have been trying to find one for twelve years."

The brothers gladly gave him a copy.

The Ecumenical officials do not want God's light on a hill. They prefer it hidden under a bushel. On July 23, 1988, Suárez said, "Churches must have their activities during their normal weekly meetings . . . There must not be groups of people in the streets waiting for the services to begin." With so few church buildings, however, facilities are frequently crowded. Christians must wait in the street to get in.

Despite the pressure from Suárez, many Baptist churches in southeastern Cuba hold six services a day, several days a week. The Pentecostal church in Madruga recently held meetings that lasted forty-four consecutive days. The pastor in Primer Paso held three meetings a day with standing room only. In Ranchuelo a young Methodist Christian preaches in Baptist and Pentecostal churches, and many are coming to God.

Jesus said, "Go into all the world." He did not say to sit back and wait for permission from atheistic councils. Not one reference in the New Testament says the apostles applied for permission from the government or from the Pharisees to share God's Word. The government is on the shoulders of Jesus Christ. We must obey God rather than man. Jesus told a parable of the kingdom of God. The message it contained was "Occupy until I come."

Compassion for those in trouble is at the heart of the gospel. Christian love implies sacrifice. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body," Paul wrote. "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."⁵

We can be a friend of the martyrs in many ways. First, by praying for our neighbors in Cuba. God is doing a wondrous work among the believers in Cuba, but He has put into our hands the task of holding these dear ones up with our

⁵Hebrews 13:3, 16 (KJV).



These boxes of Christian literature are printed inside Cuba. We help in their printing.

prayers. We can intercede for Christian leaders, churches and prisoners. We can pray for the Communists, and for the more than ten million Cubans under their boots.

Let us daily remember the believers in Maffo, Contramaestre, Santiago de Cuba and all the other cities and communities of this island nation. Pray

for continued revival. Pray for sustained courage and strength in the presence of tribulation. Ask God to open the eyes of the spiritually blind to the everlasting truth of His Word. Let us especially remember those suffering in wretched prisons simply for taking a stand for God and truth.

Second, by thinking creatively. With our marvelous brains, we can imagine, create, build, work, and potentially accomplish mighty acts. I am dedicated to making the burdens of the Cuban church lighter. We have the Spirit, the love, the technology, the energy, the time. God has the resources, the power, the wisdom. Together we can carry the warmth and hope of His Word to our brethren in bonds.

Third, by writing letters. Cuban Communist authorities are afraid of and amazed by our light. They recognize the awesome power of the printed word. Our letters bring hope and courage to believers starved for the fellowship of loving, caring Christians in free lands.

Fourth, by investigating the plight of the martyrs. Conflicting reports and opinions on the true condition of the persecuted church can leave us confused and uncertain of our task. Uncovering the truth will make us more effective in our outreach.

Fifth, by supporting Christian groups who legitimately buy air time for Spanish gospel radio broadcasts into Cuba. In cancer treatment, the tumor is bombarded with powerful radiation. These broadcasts and other efforts at penetrating the Sugar Cane Curtain with the gospel are

mighty bombardments against the Communist cancer in Cuba. No place on Earth can escape the powerful radio waves of Jesus. Thanks to that unstoppable preacher—the radio—God's Word can be heard even in the most remote villages.

Finally, by applying international pressure. The words of Armando Valladares before the hearings in Washington, D.C. bear the effects of outside pressure. "There's no doubt there was a change in the attitude of the authorities that could be linked to what was happening outside of the country," he said.

"I recall when there was a letter signed by a group of American Representatives and Senators to Fidel Castro asking for my freedom and for humane treatment.

"I noticed a slight change in the way I was treated. For the first time in years they allowed me to take a little bit of sun for a few days. After the effects of this letter vanished, I went back to where I was before.

"I think it's important to keep up this pressure campaign from abroad because it's things like this that finally helped obtain my own freedom . . ."

As the plane lightened and dipped slightly forward for our descent into New York, I felt thankful for the many Christians who had prayed for me while I suffered in a Cuban prison.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we're making our final approach into John F. Kennedy International," the intercom crackled. "We ask that you put your seats in their upright position . . ."

The bustle of flight attendants and passengers

preparing for the landing broke my reverie. In moments the Pan Am jumbo liner touched down and roared to a stop. As the plane taxied slowly to our arrival gate, I recalled a story told to me in Dublin by the Irish Red Cross.

At seventy-five, Cuban Pablo Rodríguez saw no hope in life. He had made out his will and was planning to commit suicide. Shuffling through some papers in a big trunk in the attic of his house in Havana, he found a black book. He paused to look at it, sitting on the floor with his back against the trunk.

Pablo had not seen his Bible for sixty years. The now closed Baptist missions school had presented it to him during his graduation in 1928.

As he thumbed through the yellowed pages, he recalled the love and care that had surrounded him. He remembered the power and conviction that his teachers had shown. The never-sleeping God spoke to him once more. There, in his hands, lay the message of hope. Bowing his head, Pablo again surrendered his life to the living Christ.

Joyfully, he decided to call his son. The son and his bride, part of the Communist elite of Cuba, had gone on a honeymoon to Moscow. On their return flight, the Aeroflot jet stopped in Shannon, Ireland, to refuel. There they had defected, choosing to live in Ireland in an apartment provided by the Red Cross.

The elderly Rodríguez dialed the phone, his heart pounding. Would his words make a difference?

"Please," he begged his children, tears running

down his face. "You must do something for me! Promise me you will do it."

They were mystified, but they promised.

"You must find a church there, any church, where they present Jesus. He is the answer. He is the One. Look for Him. Look for Jesus. . . ."

Passengers were lining both isles of the aircraft waiting for the doors to open. With carry-on bags in hand, I eased out of my seat and joined the others. The line soon began to move slowly toward the exit. Walking through the concourse of the terminal to my connecting flight to Dallas/Ft. Worth, I determined to continue speaking out for the persecuted church. I prayed that others would also take up the challenge. Yes, Jesus is the answer. Our message to the oppressed and downtrodden must ever be, "Look for Him."

Epilog

While speaking in India recently, I learned how Indian Christians helped to gain my release from Combinado del Este Prison in Cuba. Although many Christians around the world had a part in my release, I wish to tell the story of these believers.

Indian evangelist, Dr. P.P. Job who works with our mission¹ in India, flew to Calcutta to speak with Mother Teresa. She received the Nobel Peace Prize for working with the poor and dying. Dr. Job and Mother Teresa had completed a Christian printing project together. The two of them flew to Delhi to speak with Prime Minister Indira Ghandi.

When they arrived, Mrs. Ghandi was meeting with Fidel Castro. They walked into the room

¹The Love in Action Society.

where the government leaders were sitting. With tears on her cheeks, Mother Teresa asked Castro, "Why do you keep this Tom White in prison for twenty-four years? He has a wife and two small children." Looking at him kindly, but intently, she pleaded, "Why don't you let him go home?"

"Who is this man?" Castro asked with false concern. He had personally decided my sentence. Calling his assistant over to his chair, Castro instructed, "Write his name. He will go free."

Mrs. Ghandi stood and clapped her hands in delight. Two weeks later my fellow prisoner, Mel Bailey, and I left Cuba.

After thanking and sharing Christ's love with the Indian Christians in Bombay, Madras, Cochin and Trivandrum, my daughter and I left Delhi for home. As the wheels came up on the 747, I recalled a song we had learned from Mishna, a four-year-old Indian girl we had met. Her song contained the most profound theological statement I have heard anywhere. Tears formed in my eyes as I hummed it in the dark aircraft cabin, holding my daughter's hand.

*One, two, three, Jesus loves me
Four, five, glad He's alive
Six, seven, eight, God is great
Nine, ten, say amen!*

Appendix

Friends have asked me whether the healings which took place in Maffo, Contramaestre and Santiago de Cuba can be verified. Doctors in Havana and Santiago have observed the changes. Communist Party members and others who attacked the churches are even more effective witnesses. Many of them found the Lord Jesus at these meetings as a result of the healings.

Many individuals are skeptical that God heals physical problems today. The fact remains that God does heal.

In the early 1900s, God used Rhoda Henry, a simple Christian woman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, to heal sick, lame and blind people on the island of Nevis. God healed Amish pastor Neal Beachy of paralysis when his elders anointed him with oil and prayed for him.

Let me tell you what happened in our family when I was a boy. My older brother, now a professor in New York, suffered from a large cyst on the back of his neck. The cyst had been growing for some time, and the doctor feared that it could be entwined with the spinal nerves and blood vessels in that area. He asked my mother to bring him back Monday morning for possible surgery.

Sunday night, Mother went to the altar at church and prayed for him. My brother left the choir and joined her. On Monday they went to the doctor's office for his pre-operative examination. Something had happened.

The doctor strode into the waiting room where my mother was sitting and stretched out his arms with palms up. "It's gone! It's gone!" he exclaimed.

I have had stomach and lymph cancers, internal bleeding, and abdominal surgeries. God has healed me using doctors, and I am sure at times without them.

Some of the churches attacked in Cuba are of the Assemblies of God, which is known for its ministry of healing. Mark Buntain, a missionary of this movement, is giving his life in India where people have been touched through his ministry. Nevertheless, he has built the largest, most modern Christian hospital in Calcutta.

The Cuban pastors and congregations mentioned in this book also believe God works through medicine. No extreme dogmas here.

Addendum

The Situation of the Church in Cuba in the Mid 90s

Article One

With Oppression Comes Greater Determination

In 1996, the church in Cuba was reminded by the government that they are not of this world. This latest form of persecution is producing a stronger, more determined Christianity. The house-church movement in Cuba is growing in size and in a deeper understanding of the Christian life. Their voices often go unheard, as many times when a church is closed. However, Christians have taken to the streets, protesting in front of the police station. These believers seize every opportunity to share Christ, often witnessing to the police who confront them.

During the summer of 1996, eight house churches in Holguin Province were faced with this opposition by the government. All were closed or destroyed by the authorities. The Voice of the

Martyrs was able to get medicine, vitamins, clothes, Christian literature, and financial aid to these churches.

In the small village of Moa, after authorities closed down the church, they threatened the pastor with arrest if he didn't leave that area. Believers in Moa refused to be intimidated, demanding that their pastor be allowed to stay. They were told, "If you continue to protest, we will take you to jail or we will shoot you!"

On September 11, 1996, authorities used a bulldozer to tear down the construction of the Assembly of God Church in Guayabo, Jimaguayu founded by Pastor Orson Vila, who was arrested in May 1995 for "spreading the gospel" but was released from prison in early 1996. Then authorities proceeded to burn the church benches. The pastor of the church, Rodolfo Mesa Peres, was sent to jail for a day. Authorities threatened he would disappear if he discussed this with anyone. A layman of his church, Marco Antonio Gomez Brunet, was given an 18-month prison sentence for showing Christian videos in his home and in other Christians' homes (with their permission). He was not allowed to defend himself in court and was charged with "abusing religious freedom" and "violation of the home."

Castro's government has used many means to stifle the Church, but little do they know that their opposition has yielded greater determina-

tion among the Body of Christ. In December 1995, a regulation was enacted that forbids the sale of paper, ink, typewriters, computers and mechanical parts for photocopiers and printing presses to religious organizations. Technicians who are discovered helping churches repair their machinery risk losing their jobs. (New Life, March 21, 1996)

In spite of all the regulations, laws and efforts on behalf of the Cuban government to stop the Church from growing, Christians still gather together and worship. They have nothing to lose...They have Christ.

Escape to Cuba

In November 1994, when thousands of Cubans fled the island on homemade rafts, VOM shipped clothes, Bibles, and Christian literature to the USA Naval Base at Guantanamo. Marco Antonio Gomez Brunet, one of the escaped Cubans, floated to this base with only the shirt on his back. The seed of the gospel penetrated his heart as he read about Christ and listened to a sermon from a chaplain. In this time of transformation, God changed his entire life and focus. Totally convinced that God needed him in Cuba, and giving up a chance to go to America, Marco risked his life crossing the minefields to re-enter Cuba.

At first, Cuban Christians were skeptical about his conversion. He was finally received as a church member but did not want to spend his

time ia calentar bancosîowarming the benches. He began a ministry to show Christian films across the island and took this opportunity to preach and testify about the Lord.

The results were tremendous. Marco brought a great blessing and many were won to Christ. As Fidel Castro was preparing for his religious visit with the Pope, his Cuban police arrested Marco in Guayabo, Camaguey. In September 1996, Marco was sentenced to one year, six months of prison. He was accused of îviolating homes.î The state brought no witness to testify against him. The ones responsible for his imprisonment are the Tribunal Province of Camaguey.

In court, Marco dressed in a pullover and slacks calmly listened to the judges and lawyers. Then as he was questioned he gave his Christian testimony and explained that his only crime was to present Christian films and minister the Word of God.

Marco was later transferred from Prision Ceramica Roja in Camaguey to a hard labor camp. We have not received any further updates on his situation.

Article Two

Fidel Castro Strikes Again

Immediately after visiting the Pope in November 1996, Fidel Castro returned to Cuba and closed more than 30 house churches in the province of Holguin and more than 40 house

churches in the provinces of Camaguey, Ciego de Avila, Villa Clara, and Cienfuegos.

He does not allow new churches to be built and is terrified of the uncontrollable wave of Christianity. Bulldozers, boards and bullying policemen try to stop the church, threatening the pastors not to talk, while publicly the Cuban government announces that it will allow 15 priests and more than 20 nuns to return to the IslandÖcontrol on Castro's conditions.

On September 1, 1975, Castro's guards machine-gunned to death Pastor Gerardo Gonzalez Alvarez in Boniato Prison like they killed many other Christians. Pastor Alvarez's last words were, "Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they are doing."

Article Three

Cuban Police Smash Baptist Church

The little Baptist church building at Yamanigüey was in need of repair. Rainwater would pour in through holes in the roof. The walls were cracked. The pastor, Raul S., and the congregation decided to build, at great sacrifice, a new sanctuary beside the old structure. They mixed the concrete by hand and lovingly smoothed the 20-foot-by-40-foot floor (the size of a living room in many American homes). Using rough-sawn wood and zinc sheets for the roof, they lacked only the windows and doors.

Three months into the construction, the church's new pastor, Olvis Gamez, decided to consult with the authorities for permission to build. The local Cuban Communists had never given permission before, but surely now that something had been done, it would be different. One official who had come previously from Moa had given permission but changed his mind.

The authorities told Pastor Gamez that the congregation themselves must destroy the new building. They refused. Baptist leaders then went to Havana to meet with the Minister of Religion, who is an atheist. The Minister told them angrily that they could not reconstruct the church. The police visited Pastor Gamez six times and stood inside the church refusing to let the congregation sing hymns.

On April 16, 1996, at 5:00 a.m., a large group of authorities came to the church where the members had gathered for a 4:00 a.m. prayer meeting. The officials dragged the Christians out of the church, then police surrounded the building and began destroying it. The people of Yamanigüey, including nonbelievers, came to the site to express their sadness and disgust with the Communists who were busy smashing chairs and destroying half of the new building. Then the officers carried off salvageable parts, stealing in the name of Fidel Castro's government.

Now, after the raid in 1996, the pulpit and some chairs are assembled in the pastor's living room for service time. The Christians there sent us a message:

îThey have destroyed our sanctuary, but they can never demolish or destroy the church. The church of Christ continues walking through this despicable gesture of the Communist government, realizing that our congregation has become stronger. Those who were partially weak in the faith have risen up with new strength to follow Him who loves us, who brought us to Himself, and who will never abandon us. Also, after these attacks many new souls have surrendered to Christ.î

Article Four

Cuban Police Fail To Destroy îThe Templeî

Many pastors in Cuba refer to their church building as îEl Temploî—the Temple. The Cuban Communist government, alarmed at the growth of house churches (over 800 in the last five years), has been destroying or closing house churches. The Minister of Religion, Caridad Bello, an atheist, has also maintained government policy by not allowing new churches to be built.

On May 2, 1997, police closed the house church of Cajobabo, a village near Imias, which is seventy kilometers from Guantanamo. Pastor

Bladimir Mato was living in the little house, reconstructed with permission of the local authorities. Seventy Christians would pack the living room and dining area to worship the Lord in this village, which has no church building.

The Friday morning of May 2, police entered Pastor Bladimir's little house, also a "Temple" for worship, and began throwing the chairs and the rest of the living room furniture into the front yard. Then they took the Mato's family's dishes, photographs, bedding and clothing and threw all of it into the yard as neighbors gathered to watch.

The Cuban government ejected the pastor's family and moved another family into the house. In Cuba, all property is owned by the state. For serving Jesus, the Mato family was sent to live in a "posilga," a filthy hut.

But like the Christians in Hebrews 10:34 who lost "everything," the Mato family continues to rejoice knowing their treasure is in heaven. The Cuban police did not destroy the real "Temple," the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Those temples, the believers of Cuba, continue to spread the Hope that is Jesus Christ.

Some churches closed in Cuba as of 1997:
Church pastored by Alexis in Sitio Grande, Villa Clara
Church of Pastor Oreste Rodriguez in Juragua,

Cienfuegos

Church of Pastor Roberto Manso in Primero de Mayo, Cienfuegos

Casa de Oracion (House of Prayer) in Cojimar, Havana

Because Christians expelled from these churches move to another location, the church is growing. Pilgrims are not too concerned with location when God is moving. The church from Cojimar now meets under some trees.

Article Five

More Christian Materials Confiscated in Cuba

Though some Christian organizations report increased freedoms for the official church in Cuba, the house church movement still remains under close watch. Though government officials may destroy the physical building, they cannot destroy the spiritual building of the Body of Christ.

In the spring of 1997, The Voice of the Martyrs received a report from "Brother Dan," a Christian who routinely makes trips into Cuba taking in tracts, video players, and New Testaments for the church. On a trip in April, these items were confiscated.

Upon his arrival in Cuba, customs agents discovered the items and soon a dozen agents were investigating. All the medical supplies he was carrying were allowed to enter Cuba, but the other materials were not. Customs made a

three-page list of the illegal items. Authorities told Brother Dan that he could have the confiscated items if he obtained a letter from the official church. But upon discussing this claim with local members of the official church, he realized that he was just getting the run-around.

Brother Dan visited a government-organized religious body (one approved and controlled by the government) hoping that they would be able to help release the contraband items from customs. The director of the official organization told him that if he had entered Cuba on a religious visa with such items, they would not have been confiscated. However, this claim contradicts a report that VOM received from one of our international directors the spring of 1997. When our director went to Cuba with a companion who had a religious visa, the companion's Bibles were confiscated at the airport and he was interrogated for thirty minutes. All the materials were returned to Brother Dan when he left the country.

About the Author

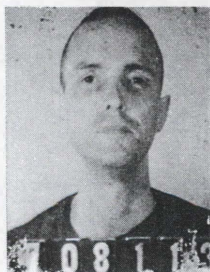
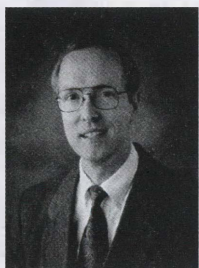
Tom White began working with The Voice of the Martyrs in 1972, With a special burden for Cuba. For seven years he secretly carried hundreds of thousands of gospel portions into Cuba using ships and airplanes.

Tom was imprisoned there in 1979 and 1980, yet continues the same work today. He has traveled to more than thirty countries around the world, sharing the story of our only hope— Jesus Christ. His first book, *Missiles Over Cuba*, contains the story of the first literature campaigns and his imprisonment.

The mission continues its ministry to the Christians and communists in Cuba. They support shortwave gospel broadcasts, and supply Bibles and forms of material help to those who suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ.

GOD'S MISSILES OVER CUBA

Imprisoned for 17 months
Tom White
survived to tell the thrilling story
of God's suffering church
behind the Sugar Cane Curtain



The threat of missiles from Communist Cuba is one of America's great fears. Cuba's terror comes from missiles of another kind.

For seven years, Tom White led a massive gospel invasion of Cuba to bring the peace of God to this downtrodden island in the Caribbean. More than 400,000 pieces of Christian literature, missiles of love, were either dropped from the sky or carried ashore by the sea.

On May 27, 1979, his plane crashed on a Cuban highway. Brutal treatment from the secret police, months of solitary confinement, and the twenty-four-year sentence of a kangaroo court form the backdrop of this fascinating story. In this school of suffering, at Combinado del Este Prison, the author met and worshiped with the suffering Cuban church.

This is not a story of the triumph of a person over a system. It is a dynamic eyewitness account of God's conquering love, of God's faithful protection, and of God's patient instruction in Castro's hell.

ISBN 0-88005-000-4

In October of 1967 Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, along with his wife Sabina, founded a non-profit missionary organization to bring assistance to persecuted Christians around the world.

Today **The Voice of the Martyrs, Inc.**, directed by Pastor Wurmbrand, continues to carry out this work. For more information about the mission activities or a complete listing of books and tapes by Richard Wurmbrand, please write to **THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS** at the addresses below.

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The background of the page is a detailed map of Cuba and its surrounding regions. The map shows various geographical features, including the Gulf of Mexico to the north, the Caribbean Sea to the south, and the Yucatan Peninsula to the west. Key locations such as Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and other major cities are marked. The map also includes elevation contours, a grid of latitude and longitude lines, and various labels for smaller towns and regions. A prominent 'RESTRICTED' stamp is visible in the upper right corner of the map area.

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The events presented in this book were taken from the wire services, news articles from three continents, written and verbal reports of pastors and professors who visited Cuba, personal interviews, and taped and written testimony from Christians living behind the Sugar Cane Curtain.

This book does not seek to dramatize the events. All conversations and actions of Cuban authorities and the church occurred as written. The names of the police and Christians are real.

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