CUBAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

During the past twelve years almost half a million Cubans have sought refuge in Miami. Among them were over 14,000 unaccompanied children between 6 and 18 years of age. This article tells for the first time the story of how the children's exodus began. It covers the period between the middle of November 1960, when we first became aware of the need, and 1 February 1961, when I met with the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to brief him on the plight of the unaccompanied children among the refugees. Two days later, President Kennedy announced a government aid program for Cuban refugees which included money for the care of unaccompanied children, "the most troubled group among the refugee population." 1

About 4:30 p.m. on 26 December 1960, Pan American World Airways Flight 422 from Havana touched down at Miami International Airport. There were few passengers, if any, on that flight who did not experience a real sense of relief as they descended from the airplane. Events in Cuba were rapidly moving toward a climax and those who could were joining the increasing exodus to Miami. Two teen-agers, a Cuban brother and sister, were among the passengers. Sixto Aquino and his sister, Vivian, must have shared in the general relief, but they still had reason to be apprehensive. No friends or relatives waited for them outside the doors of U.S. Customs. They had left their parents behind not knowing when they would

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* This article is taken from the introductory portion of the author's comprehensive study of Cuban refugee children in the United States, now in progress.
see them again; and they were going as aliens into a new adult world where almost everything would be strange and new, including the language. Although Sixto and his sister did not know it, they were the first of a long line of youths who would make this same trip during the following twenty-three months.

Waiting for them at the desk of U. S. Immigration was a social worker, Mrs. Louise Cooper, from Miami’s Catholic Welfare Bureau. The day before, in response to a cryptic message from Cuba, Mrs. Cooper and I, as Catholic Welfare Bureau Executive Director, had begun what was to become a daily vigil at the immigration desk. Thus it was on Christmas Day 1960 that the program of the Catholic Welfare Bureau for the care and protection of unaccompanied Cuban children in the United States actually got under way.

News reporters, sworn to secrecy, would christen it Operation Pedro Pan. Before it ended it would involve thousands of families, Cuban and American, several foreign governments, numerous officials of federal and state government, well over 100 child welfare agencies, and the three major faiths in a unique effort of cooperation to help children, the innocent victims of power politics and clashing ideologies. Even though Operation Pedro Pan itself would only last less than two years, the Cuban Children’s Program would go on for many years and would have a very real influence on the development of cooperative programs between government and voluntary child welfare agencies in the United States.

It is important to understand the difference between Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children’s Program. The Cuban Children’s Program was inaugurated to provide foster care for Cuban refugee children who found themselves in the United States without the care and protection of their parents. Operation Pedro Pan was developed to help Cuban parents send their children unaccompanied to the United States to avoid Communist indoctrination. Both programs developed at the same time but, while Operation Pedro Pan terminated with the missile crisis, the Cuban Children’s Program is still in operation at the time of writing. Between the 3 January 1961 break in Cuban-U.S. diplomatic relations and the October 1962 missile crisis, 14,048 Cuban students were helped by Operation Pedro Pan to enter the United States; 6,486 of them received foster care in the Cuban Children’s Program either on their arrival or shortly thereafter.

Cuban refugees had begun to arrive in Miami on 1 January 1959, the morning after the fall of Batista. During the following year some 4,000 Cubans had taken refuge in Miami. Most of them had either been associated with the previous government or were of the upper class who felt threatened by the new regime. However, the increasing radicalization of
the Cuban situation during the summer and autumn of 1960 caused more and more Cubans of all classes to look toward Miami. The lines of visa applicants outside the U.S. Embassy in Havana lengthened in proportion as the crisis grew more serious. By October, Cuban refugees were recognizable on the streets of Miami. The local community and state and federal authorities were being alerted to their plight by concerned people such as Miami's Bishop (now Archbishop) Coleman F. Carroll.

It is now calculated that there were 12,000 refugees in Miami in December 1961, although estimates at that time placed the figure two to three times higher. Until the missile crisis forced the end of commercial air traffic between Havana and Miami, almost 200 new refugees arrived each day.

During this same period thousands more arrived by small boat across the treacherous Straits of Florida and through such third countries as Spain, Jamaica, and Mexico. After the missile crisis in October 1962, these were the only routes available for three years until President Johnson inaugurated the Varadero Freedom Flights in December 1965. The refugee exodus then entered a new phase with the emphasis on the reunification of families. During the first months of these flights the majority of children separated from their parents in 1961-1962 were reunited with them in exile. By January 1971, it is estimated that there were 261,000 Cubans living in Miami and almost as many throughout the country.

This paper is concerned with how it all began and the first five weeks of our two programs. By the end of this time the Catholic Welfare Bureau had built up the basic organization that was necessary to administer both programs and, with this, came much more adequate record-keeping. The story of the following years is well documented in Catholic Welfare Bureau files and its extraction presents a very different type of challenge. In the beginning, however, as in every new operation, there was little time or opportunity for record-keeping in the formal sense. This paper, therefore, is the result of careful gathering of data from correspondence, minutes of meetings, and appointment books. For their own protection the names of some people still in Cuba have been purposely omitted. The story of their contributions to the program must wait for other and hopefully happier times on that island.

There is one question that is frequently, if not inevitably, raised and which merits at least some discussion at this time. It is posed in different ways. Why did Cuban parents send their children into exile alone? How could a parent do that? Why did the parents not come with them? At times this question has been asked by the children themselves, especially the younger ones as they grew older. They have also been posed by Americans
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who have learned of the program. To this question there are no simple answers and perhaps no one answer which covers all situations and circumstances. This Cuban phenomenon was not, however, unique or unprecedented.

In modern times many children have been separated from their parents and have found themselves in foreign lands and among strange people who differed from them in culture and often in language. The nineteen-thirties saw Jewish children smuggled out of Nazi Germany and cared for in foster homes in England and other countries. A number were later brought to the United States. The Spanish Civil War caused the evacuation of thousands of children from Spain. Basque children were taken to Belgium, France, and England and cared for in special camps and schools. Children—5,000 it is said—were sent to Russia as the Republican government went down to defeat. In 1937 a ship sailed from Barcelona to Mexico with some 460 children accompanied by a number of their teachers. In 1940 during the Battle of Britain approximately 1,000 British children were sent to the United States for safety. With the end of World War II, and in the years following, some 5,000 war orphans were brought from Europe to new homes in the United States.

But the Spanish experience was the most important for Cuban parents. Cuba had always been close to Spain. It was the last of the Spanish American colonies to gain independence. The large Spanish migration to the island since independence had kept its ties to the motherland close and strong. As Castro and his leading followers made statements after statement, each more radical than the one before, concerning the education of the young generation, the fear of the parents mounted. It is my conviction that, as the threat of communism grew, Cuban parents were greatly influenced by the memory of the Spanish Civil War.³ They recalled the

³ "The first refugees (from Bilbao) to be evacuated were children, to be parcelled out among those who agreed to look after them. The CGT in France agreed to take 2,300 and the Soviet Government undertook the care of Communist children. A Basque children’s relief committee in England, supported by the British branch of the Roman Church, agreed to look after 4,000 children. Opinion was nevertheless so cautious in America that even a project to bring certain Basque children there was dropped as a possible breach of neutrality." Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 437, 438.

³ Michael Kenny (Washington, D.C., Catholic University), unpublished manuscript. "From 1937–1943 they (‘Los Niños de Morelia’) were educated and cared for in the España-Mexico school or similar institutions entirely at the expense of the Mexican Government. See ‘Los Niños de Morelia’ by Vera Foulkes, Social Work Thesis presented to U.N.A.M. Mexico D.P., 1953."


⁵ "As the revolution entered its second year, it was evident that a large part of Catholic opinion, particularly among the regular clergy, was opposed to the
stories and rumors of children sent to Russia for training, and of other children held as hostages. They began to fear the same thing happening in Cuba. They saw that last refuge from indoctrination, the private school, threatened and they doubted their own ability to offset the effects of indoctrination and propaganda on their children.

During 1960 rumors that added to the panic of the parents began to circulate in Cuba and in exile circles in Miami. The principal one among these referred to the patria potestad or the rights of parents over their children. Purported copies of a new decree circulated throughout underground circles. According to this decree (as rumored) "all children will remain with their parents until they are three years old, after which they must be entrusted for physical and mental education to the Organización de Círculos Infantiles" (state day-care centers). Children from three to ten would live in government dormitories in their home provinces and would be permitted to visit their parents “no less than two days a month.” Older children would be “assigned to the most appropriate place” and thus might never come home.6 Spawled by this basic rumor, other stories related that children were picked up off the streets and never seen again; that orphanages, such as “Casa Beneficencia,” had been emptied and all the children sent to Russia for indoctrination; that in the town of Bayamo, fifty mothers had signed a pact to kill their children rather than hand them over to Castro; etc.

Additional rumors concerning this decree preceded each major anniversary in the revolutionary calendar: 1 January 1961, 26 July 1961, 1 January 1962.7 Although Castro himself branded the patria potestad docum-

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7 “We have heard, of course, from time to time of the efforts, the laws that are being drawn up to prevent any child over the age of five to leave Cuba. Last July 26th, or prior to that time, when on Fidel’s great celebration we knew there were sitting on his desk laws that would do just that. There was, according to the information supplied to us by the underground, quite a controversy between two sets of Fidel’s advisers, the economists and party-line Communists. The economists maintained that it was necessary to keep the flow of U.S. dollars and therefore they were for continuation of allowing people to leave. The comment of the party line, of course, as we know, is to grab on to the children. Now the deadline for this to happen is supposedly January 1st, 1962. And we just expect sooner or later it is going to happen.” Testimony of Wendel N. Rollason, Director, Inter-American Affairs Commission, Miami, Florida. U.S. Senate Hearings, December 1961, p. 159.
ment a forgery put out by the underground and the CIA to discredit the regime, the departure of Fidelito, Castro's own twelve-year-old son, for Russia helped confirm the rumors. When the government organized the Association of Youth Rebels and Rebel Pioneers, the fear of the parents grew as they saw their children become active in these youth groups of the regime and as they began to reflect the first effects of this indoctrination. A few parroted phrases of propaganda heard on the radio were enough to put parents into a panic.

In the beginning of the children's exodus, two groups of parents seemed most affected by this fear: the small minority, generally of the middle class, who were practicing Catholics and those of the middle class who worked in foreign-owned businesses and saw their own world rapidly disappearing. In general members of the wealthy upper class had solved their problem—they were already in Miami. Consequently, although families of all classes were represented from the beginning, the majority of those interested in sending their children to the United States belonged to the middle class and had sent their children to private schools. This is evidenced in the many thousands of letters received by the Catholic Welfare Bureau from families asking for help in getting their children to the United States, and by those who succeeded in their quest. For Catholic parents, the changing attitude of the hierarchy toward the regime confirmed their fears.

On November 21st, 1960 Monsignor Enrique Perez Serrantes (the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba who saved Castro's life after his 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks) issued his third Pastoral on the subject (Communism in the Castro Regime), this time against those Catholics who continued to support the revolution. On December 4th, the hierarchy issued their final joint document, this time an open letter to Castro challenging him for the last time to repudiate communism, and hoping 'that the Lord may illumine you.' On December 16th Fidel Castro spoke on television and fired the last salvo in the war of words between the revolution and the Church.8

Another factor that influenced the decisions of a certain number of parents was that of involvement in the anti-Castro underground. In some cases it was the parents who were active and in others their teen-aged sons. The former feared that their children might be used against them by the regime either as hostages or spies.9 The latter feared that their sons' involvement would get the whole family in trouble.

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8 Leslie Dewart, Cuba, Church, and Crisis, p. 161.
9 "They are taking the children of underground members who have been caught and either jailed or shot and to punish the families these children are being sent deliberately, being picked and sent to Russia by way of retaliation, as a way of
By December 1960 opposition to the regime, already widespread among Catholic university students, involved the younger age groups, such as the Juventud Obrera Católica and Juventud Estudiantil Católica, and students in the various Catholic secondary schools such as Colegio de Belén and Colegio de La Salle in Havana.10 These two types of youngsters, the underground activists and those who had received indoctrination, showed up among the unaccompanied children in Miami and presented us with special problems due to their anger against their parents for having shipped them to Miami.

Some parents had, of course, other reasons for staying in Cuba beside activity in the underground or the lack of a visa. Many stayed because they owned property which they hoped to keep as long as possible. Others remained because they expected the regime to be overthrown shortly, if not by the underground groups or exiles, perhaps by the U.S. Marines. Others were unwilling to leave because of aged or sick parents, or because a husband or brother, wife or sister was a political prisoner. There were those who stayed because they felt that it was the proper thing to do. Later, some, such as certain engineers and medical doctors, were not allowed to depart because they had special training or qualifications that were needed.

For some, the separation between parents and children was to be rather short, a few weeks or months. For the majority, it would be about three or four years. For others, it would stretch into several years and, for a few, forever. During the course of our program some parents and two children died before they could be reunited. A few parents changed their minds about the regime. Their children in exile were faced with the terrible decision of having to choose between life in the United States and a return to their parents in Cuba. One did choose to return after eight years in the United States. It was against this background of crisis and fear in an island one hundred miles from our shores that we in Miami became involved in the biggest child refugee program ever recorded in the Western Hemisphere.

Toward the end of September 1960 the staff of the Centro Hispánico

a threat to other families of what is going to happen to their own children if they do not knuckle under. Children are paraded in front of their fathers in prison as a means of exhorting confession." Ibid., p. 160.

10 "Student (university) opposition to the Castro regime was at first amorphous, but as the tempo of the revolution increased and the communists gained in strength, it took on definite form. Later in 1959 and throughout 1960, anti-Castro organizations established branches within the University of Havana. Among them, one known as Trincheras (The Trench), whose leaders originated from the Catholic University Association (Agrupación Católica Universitaria) soon acquired some importance. The Church provided the framework for these students' anti-communist activities, offering them a doctrinal alternative to Communism." Jaime Suchlicki, University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920–1968 (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1969), p. 95.
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Católico became alarmed at the rapid increase in the number of newly arrived Cubans seeking assistance. This agency had been founded by Bishop Carroll in 1959 for the specific purpose of helping the Spanish-speaking newcomer adjust to life in Miami. In recent years, the number of Spanish-speaking newcomers in Miami had increased, many of them Puerto Ricans and Latin American emigrants, in marginal jobs. The social service agencies, including the Catholic Welfare Bureau, were not geared to their needs. The purpose of the Centro Hispano Católico was to provide an agency where a bilingual staff could make the Latins feel at home. Close working relationships existed between the Centro and the Catholic Welfare Bureau, although each had its own administration. When the Centro opened its doors, Cuban refugees were not a problem. The vast majority of refugees from Cuba during the first eighteen months of the Castro Regime were able to provide for themselves. 12

Events in Cuba during the summer and fall of 1960, however, were to swell the exile exodus quickly. On 29 June the oil refineries were confiscated; 6 July the expropriation with compensation of all U.S. property in Cuba was authorized; 6 August U.S.-owned sugar mills, as well as other U.S. business concerns, were taken over by the Cuban government; 14 October the Urban Reform Law was enacted confiscating urban rental property. These events in rapid succession caused more and more people to make the decision to leave for Miami.

This led in turn to the imposition of increasing restrictions on what people leaving Cuba could take with them. More of the exiles arrived in Miami destitute for all practical purposes. The burden of assistance fell first on their own relatives and Cuban friends already established in Miami.12 Then they turned to the Centro Hispano Católico, the only agency in the community, public or private, available to the Spanish-

11 "Most Cuban refugees arriving in the United States during the first year and a half after the Castro Revolution were able to bring sizable amounts of money as they fled Cuba and upon arrival in the United States were self-supporting. Restrictions on removal of money and possessions from Cuba became increasingly severe after mid-1960. Real and personal property of refugees was confiscated. Each departing refugee was permitted to take only five U.S. dollars and items for personal use. Later no money could legally be taken from Cuba by refugees and clothing was restricted to a given number of pieces. Without funds, household goods and other essentials, refugees were in immediate need of welfare assistance upon arrival." The Cuban Migration 1959–1960 (Miami, Florida: Research Institute for Cuba and the Caribbean; Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1967), p. 24.

12 "The weight of welfare assistance fell first on the local Cuban community in the Miami area. In fact, as Reverend Bryan O. Walsh, Executive Director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau of Miami, observed it was not until the support resources of the Cuban colony in the Miami area were reaching saturation that the larger community became fully aware of the Cuban refugee problem." Ibid, p. 24.
speaking newcomer. They were not eligible for medical care at Jackson Memorial Hospital; as yet there was no Cuban Refugee Emergency Center; Cuban children were not admitted to the Dade County public schools unless they paid tuition. Therefore, at this time the Centro Hispano Católico received the full impact of the exile influx.

Through a series of meetings beginning 29 September, the Bishop and the Centro Staff alerted the community to the presence of a rapidly increasing number of refugees in Miami with insufficient resources. Community leaders quickly recognized that the problem was beyond their capacity to solve and appealed to the federal government on the basis that the exiles were here because of U.S. national policy and that Miami was simply the most convenient port of entry.¹³

President Eisenhower appointed Mr. Tracy Voorhees, who had headed the Hungarian Refugee Program in 1956–1957, to look into the Miami situation, and allocated $1,000,000.00 for emergency aid. Mr. Voorhees came to Miami to evaluate the problem and recommended to the president that an emergency center be opened in Miami by the federal government. This recommendation was approved, and on 2 December 1960 the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center opened its doors in the old offices of the Dade County Board of Public Instruction on N.W. Third Avenue.

The Cuban Children’s Program had its beginnings in the offices of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, 395 N.W. First Street, Miami, in late November 1960. This Bureau (now the Catholic Service Bureau), the social service agency of the Catholic Diocese of Miami, was founded in 1933 and in 1945 was licensed by the Florida State Department of Public Welfare for child welfare programs. In 1960 it was a small, multi-function child and family agency with a total staff of fifteen persons and one small group home for children, St. Joseph’s Villa. During that year it had cared for about eighty dependent children in the Villa and in foster-family homes. As a member of the United Fund of Dade County, which at that time was undergoing one of its periodic financial crises, the Catholic Welfare Bureau had recently been advised to expect a thirty percent cut in its budget for 1961 due to the failure of the United Fund Appeal.

Even without the question of coping with the Cuban refugee influx, the future for all social service agencies in Miami was pretty gloomy in the fall of 1960. Public welfare agencies, always weak in Florida, were no better off than the voluntary ones. Florida had for many years competed with Mississippi for the last place among the states in per capita welfare

expenditure. Any additional strain on the welfare purse, whether public or private, would be catastrophic.

Into my office in the Catholic Welfare Bureau about 15 November 1960 a Cuban man brought a fifteen-year-old Cuban boy named Pedro. He asked me to provide a foster home or boarding school for him. Pedro had arrived in Miami a month earlier, sent by his parents who expected their relatives and friends to care for him, not realizing that these people could scarcely house and feed themselves. The youngster had been passed from one to another, often on a daily basis, with no one willing or able to accept responsibility for him. The effect on the boy’s physical and mental well-being can easily be imagined. In his first month in the United States he had lost twenty pounds. It was a scared and hungry child that stood in my office that November afternoon.

Temporary arrangements were made for the care of the boy while the agency studied the situation. Knowing what was happening in our sister agency, the Centro Hispano Católico, we realized very quickly that Pedro was the first of many and that, as the situation in Cuba grew worse, the number of truly dependent children in Miami would increase.

It was clear to me and my staff that without outside help we could not render anything more than token assistance. We realized that the question of providing for such children within their religious heritage would be fundamental in the minds of the children themselves and of their parents. In common with the rest of the community, we saw very clearly that the only solution lay in the acceptance of financial responsibility by the federal government.

We turned for help to the Welfare Planning Council, which at that time was the community agency charged with the responsibility for identifying needs and planning for solutions in the social welfare field. Its membership included most social service agencies. Since my arrival in Miami in January 1957, I had played an active role in the work of the council, serving on many committees and study groups. The council had a Family and Child Care Division of which Mr. Robert S. Jones was the executive secretary. At my request Mr. Jones called a meeting of all the child welfare agencies in the county, both public and private. The third week of November we met at the offices of the Welfare Planning Council. Present were representatives of Dade County Welfare Department, Florida State Department of Public Welfare, Florida Children’s Home Society, Children’s Service Bureau, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, and of course the Catholic Welfare Bureau.

At Mr. Jones’ request I outlined the current situation as I saw it. The Miami area was experiencing an unprecedented influx of refugees from
Cuba. Among the refugees, there was an unknown number of unac- companyed children and there was every likelihood that the number would in- crease. As the child welfare agencies of the community, we were faced with the prospect of having to care for these children whose relatives or friends were unable to receive them in their homes. The agency repre- sentatives present were well aware of the fact that community leaders had already appealed to the federal government for help in meeting the needs of the refugees in general.

We discussed Mr. Voorhees's mission in Miami and I reminded them that Mr. Voorhees had directed the federal government's program for the Hungarian Free Fighters based at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, in 1956– 1957. It was from this center that the Hungarian refugees were resettled in various parts of the country. Among them were many teen-agers who were placed with families without any of the usual investigation and planning regarded as essential by child welfare agencies. In fact, the voluntary na- tional resettlement agencies, such as Catholic Relief Services, Church World Services, and United Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society were not set up to run child welfare programs. As a result many of their placements, in- cluding some in Miami, had failed. My worry was that, unless our local agencies responded to the challenge, it was very likely that responsibility for the care of unaccompanied Cuban refugee children would be given by Mr. Voorhees to these same agencies. He had already asked them to come to Miami to help in the resettlement of the Cubans. My first concern there- fore was that the program for the care of the unaccompanied children should be handled by child welfare agencies. My second concern was that the religious heritage of the child be safeguarded. This was one of the chief reasons why parents were sending their children into exile. My third con- cern was how a program of foster care could be funded.

There was relatively little discussion since the agency representatives present understood these concerns and, indeed, shared my convictions. At this meeting, it was agreed that a request would be made to Mr. Voorhees to include in his report to President Eisenhower recommendations for the funding of a special foster care program for the care of unaccompanied Cuban refugee children under the auspices of the Miami child welfare agencies. Three of the agencies offered to care for the children within their religious heritage. Since most Cubans were at least nominally Catholic, it was recognized that the main burden would fall on the Catholic Welfare Bureau. The Children's Service Bureau agreed to care for Protestant children and the Jewish children would go to the Jewish Family and Children's Service. Upon recommendation of this meeting, the Cuban Refugee Execu- tive Committee, on 22 November, requested "... funds for foster care in
institutions or family homes for children separated from their parents, who have been sent here to avoid coercive regimentation." 14

Among the many other items included in this resolution, this was to be the only one calling for local expenditure of welfare funds which would be included in Mr. Voorhees' recommendations to the president.

If it should prove necessary beyond what private charity can do, such Mutual Security Funds, ($1,000,000.00 allocated by President Eisenhower on December 2, 1960) will also be utilized for assistance to Cuban Refugee Children in extreme need. 15

Meanwhile, other evidence of the flight of Cuban children came to the attention of the authorities. The dramatic case of two children brought to Key West Juvenile Court was symptomatic of the problem that was to mushroom into immense proportions within a very short time—that of those families without relatives or friends in Florida upon whom they could call.

In November 1960 a Cuban mother brought her two children to Key West. She feared that they would be sent to Russia because she and her husband were actively opposed to the Castro Regime. She asked the Judge of the Juvenile Court to find a home for them. The Judge assumed jurisdiction and placed the children in foster care. The mother returned to Cuba to be with her husband and to continue her work in the counterrevolutionary movement. 16

It was to help such families that Mr. James Baker came to Miami from Havana about the second week of December 1960. Mr. Baker was the headmaster of Ruston Academy, an American school in Havana, whose pupils were drawn from U.S. residents and upper-class Cuban families. Mr. Baker was joined in Miami by several U.S. businessmen formerly of Havana, and they set out to seek some way of providing shelter and education in Miami for those children who did not have relatives or friends here. Mr. Baker had sent one of his teachers to Miami and Washington the previous month to look over the situation. As a result of that visit, the decision had been made to open a boarding school in Miami for such children, and this was the purpose of the December trip. While looking for a suitable building for his school, Mr. Baker heard about the plans of the

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Catholic Welfare Bureau to provide care for unaccompanied refugee children and came to see me on 12 December 1960.

Mr. Baker talked about his plans and told me about the fears of many of his Cuban friends for the welfare of their children. He also explained that some of these friends were active in the anti-Castro underground and were afraid that their children would be taken by the government and used as hostages.

I recall our conversation very well. I had become convinced by this time that uncoordinated and scattered efforts would only do damage to the cause. Believing also that only licensed child-placing agencies should care for unaccompanied refugee children, I thought that even the best boarding school would only be a partial solution. I pointed out to Mr. Baker that this was a job for a social agency which could plan for the total care of the child, including the legal questions of custody, which were bound to come up sooner or later. I also pointed out that some children, especially the younger ones, belonged in foster families, not in institutions. I noted that the question of religious heritage would be very important in the minds of most Cuban parents, Jewish and Protestant, perhaps even more than Catholics, if the separation should prove to be lengthy. I was also able to tell him that Mr. Voorhees had indicated that funds would be available for the care of the children. As a result Mr. Baker agreed to work with us. He would get the children out of Cuba and we would see that they were met upon arrival in Miami and that they would receive proper care. He estimated that approximately 200 children would be involved in this operation. Thus began Operation Pedro Pan, our project to fly the children out of Cuba.

Working with Mr. Baker were several members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Havana, U.S. businessmen whose properties had been taken over or confiscated by the Cuban government. These men were now in Miami waiting to see what would happen in Cuba, and they had informally reorganized the American Chamber of Commerce here. They had agreed to raise funds to help Mr. Baker in his plans. One of them was Mr. Kenneth Campbell, who later wrote:

> The idea was that American firms which had been in business in Cuba would provide the funds. Jim (Baker) and his colleagues in Cuba would make the necessary arrangements to get the children out, and the group would be responsible for caring for the children once they arrived in the United States. First funds were obtained by donations from American companies which had done business in Cuba, and I believe, from one British company. I regret not being able to recall the names of all the companies which made donations, but I know that one of
the companies which made a substantial donation was Esso Standard Oil Company. I am sure that the British company which made a donation was the Shell Oil Company.

In order to prevent the Cuban Government from tracing the source of the funds, these first donations as I recall, were paid to the Catholic Welfare Bureau, which in turn issued checks to a series of American citizens residing in the Miami area, who issued personal checks for one or more airplane fares, which were transmitted to the W. Henry Smith Agency in Havana. This was a travel agency owned and operated by H. Gilbert Smith who was Executive Secretary of the American Chamber of Commerce of Cuba during the time that I was president of the Chamber.17

The basic plan was as follows:
The American Embassy in Havana would be asked to grant a student visa. This would require proof that someone would be responsible for the child while in the United States and that the child was actually enrolled in a U.S. school. The Catholic Welfare Bureau attempted to meet these requirements by giving a letter to Mr. Baker for the U.S. Embassy accepting responsibility for any child designated by him and also by making arrangements to have a U.S. Immigration Form I-20 completed by a school for each child as proof of enrollment.

Mr. Baker returned to Cuba on 13 December to put the plan into motion. Before he left he made arrangements for all communications between us to go via U.S. diplomatic pouch, thanks to the cooperation of Mr. Culver Gidden, U.S. State Department Reception Center in Miami, and Mr. Daniel Braddock, Chargé d’Affairs, U.S. Embassy in Havana.

Two days later, on 15 December 1960, several members of the American Chamber of Commerce came to see me. Among them were Mr. Kenneth Campbell, Mr. Bob O’Farrell of Esso Standard, and Mr. Richard Colligan of Freeport Sulphur Company. They brought a letter from Mr. Baker and the first list of 125 names, which had come over in the diplomatic pouch that morning.

Our network of contacts was growing. By this time it included Mrs. Norma Lemberg, a former Havana resident, who was responsible for getting I-20 forms from Mrs. Agnes Ewald at Coral Gables High School, and Dr. Sergio Giquel, who relayed many messages to and from Cuba.

Mr. Baker’s visit had brought a new dimension to the problem, mainly the question of children coming to us directly from Cuba, without any friends or relatives to meet them. In agreeing to work with Mr. Baker, we

were accepting responsibility for the reception of the children right at the point of entry, Miami International Airport, and we were agreeing to provide foster care for those who had neither friends nor relatives able and willing to take them into their own homes.

The justification for this for me was simple, even though some social welfare agencies in Miami questioned our taking on this additional responsibility. Once our agencies had received the promise of government support, it seemed clear to me that our agencies were obligated to provide a well-arranged and well-planned reception for those children who would need care. Our first thought was to provide care and protection, when necessary, for the children already living here with friends and relatives. It is important to stress the when necessary. When separation from parents is necessary, it is always much better for a child to be with relatives or friends if at all possible. We know that even a poor family is usually better than any foster family or group care institution.

We knew only too well that as soon as word got out in Miami that we were taking children under care we would be inundated with requests. When we talked to Mr. Baker earlier that same week of December 1960, not one of us could foresee what the future would hold. Within a few short weeks the whole complexion of things would change. The U.S. Embassy would be shut down, and a series of events would be put in motion leading to the Bay of Pigs invasion on 17 April 1961. What most people saw as a short-term emergency situation in December 1960 would become a long-term possibility as hopes for an early solution to the Cuban question faded.

Even before we had actually taken our first child under care, we had moved from being just the Cuban Children’s Program into what would be called in time Operation Pedro Pan. After Mr. Baker’s return to Cuba, there was little we could do in Miami except wait. Since funds would only be available on a reimbursement basis after the child was under care, we had nothing to work with. We had no assurance that any of Mr. Baker’s children would actually be able to come, and we did not know whether any more children would come at all after 1 January. The impossibility of planning in advance became a way of life for the next several years. We never knew for the first six years of the program what the next day would bring.

In the meantime, we had children in Miami like Pedro who needed care, but because of the uncertain situation we had decided to wait until January before actually taking them under care. By that time we thought we would at least know whether or not more would be arriving. If only a few children required care, then federal funds would not be forthcoming. We were well aware that the key phrase in Mr. Voorhees’s Interim Report to the President of 19 December 1960 was “... if it should prove neces-
sary beyond what private charity can do," and that we could count on federal funds only after we had exhausted our own resources.

All these agencies were very small as American social agencies go. The Catholic Welfare Bureau's one small group home for children between the ages of six and twelve, run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, had 20 children in residence at that time and nine empty beds. We had about 35 other children, mostly infants waiting for adoption placement, in foster family care. The County Welfare Department had a group of buildings vacant at their Kendall complex. These had been used for several years as a home for dependent and delinquent Negro children. Only a short time before, the county had integrated its facilities for children and thus vacated these buildings. The department offered these buildings to us for use in an emergency. They had been designed to accommodate 60 children. Eventually these became known both in Cuba and in Miami as El Campamento de Kendall, the reception center for several thousand Cuban children.

We also had another resource available without which it would have been utmost folly to attempt what we did. We knew that we could fall back on the more than 130 Catholic Charities agencies throughout the rest of the country. Thus, although we had little or nothing in the way of material and physical resources on hand, we did know that once the program got moving we had places to turn to for help. This unique capability of the Catholic Welfare Bureau was the source of our confidence in accepting the responsibility for such a program and in offering leadership to the community in what was recognized as a serious problem to be faced. History would testify that this confidence was not unfounded.

So it was that during the month of December we waited in Miami as people made preparations for the Christmas holidays. Christmas Eve was a Saturday and our offices were closed when I received word that the first of the children might be arriving the next day. The staff had dispersed for the long weekend, and I could not get in touch with our social workers. I had no idea how many children would come in the next day. Any children who came in could be taken to St. Joseph's Villa even if they had to sleep on the floor the first night. There was little else that we could do. The matter was complicated by the holidays, the shortness of time, the unknown number of children, and above all by the lack of communication with the people in Cuba. We were sure that if the authorities there got any wind of a mass movement of unaccompanied children, they would clamp down right away and ask questions afterward.

As I drove home that afternoon the enormity of the task ahead slowly dawned on me. What would we do if all 200 arrived within the next couple of days? There would not be time to gear up the program, open up the buildings at Kendall, hire the necessary staff. We could do all of these
things, if we had time. Even a slow buildup over a couple of weeks would be all the time that we needed. Once we got the children moving out of Miami to agencies around the country it would become routine. As I drove home, the faith with which I had made the promise to Jim Baker was justified and God gave me a solution to the immediate problem, the first of many such answers to prayer in the months and years to come. My way home took me by Assumption Academy, a private girls’ boarding school run by the Sisters of the Assumption. I had never been in the place, but I realized suddenly that the school would be empty for the holidays and that about 200 children could be accommodated there, even if they all came on the same flight. I stopped and went in to make my plea. Mother Elizabeth was most responsive and agreed to allow us to use the school, providing everyone could be out by the sixth of January. I remember her remarking that she could not refuse such a request on Christmas Eve. She did not realize that many would be teen-age boys and I did not tell her. As it turned out, we never had to place boys there and the few girls we did place there were out by 6 January.

Later that same day I went to St. Joseph’s Villa to see what we could do there. We worked it out so that ten or twelve boys could be accommodated there, at least overnight. Our immediate problem was solved. We had places to take the children from the airport. Yet we were caught between two conflicting desires. On the one hand we hoped that not too many would come in at the same time or even on the same day, and on the other hand we wanted to see the children get out of Cuba. Over all loomed the specter of 1 January, the second anniversary of Fidel Castro’s assumption of power. There was nothing else we could do that day, except wait for the word from Cuba and for the first children to arrive.

After Christmas we could begin to implement other plans. We would request that the County Welfare Department turn over to us the facilities at Kendall. We would also begin the task of opening up a large house at 175 S.E. 15 Road, across the street from the Assumption Academy, which had been offered to us by Mr. Maurice Ferré, a Puerto Rican industrialist in Miami whose grandparents came from Cuba. This would become our first all-Cuban receiving home for teen-age boys, since we knew that neither the Sisters of the Assumption nor St. Joseph’s would welcome teen-age boys. But on Christmas Day none of this could be done.

Christmas Day 1960 was as usual in Florida—warm. About 11:00 a.m. I was able to locate Mrs. Louise Cooper, one of our social workers, as she came home from Mass. I asked her to go to the airport with me to meet the two flights expected that afternoon, Pan Am’s Flight 422 and National’s Flight 452. By this time we ourselves had become emotionally
involved in the race against the 1 January deadline. No longer were we simply a social agency concerned about a community problem. We were now sharing the worries of families we did not even know, hundreds of miles away in a life and death struggle in the Cold War. Our excitement rose as time drew near for the first of the flights to arrive.

No children were aboard.

All our anticipation, worry, planning were held in abeyance as we awaited the second flight. No children arrived that day.

We were deeply disappointed. But we did accomplish one thing that Christmas Day. We made arrangements to work with the officials of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and to involve them in identifying the unaccompanied children arriving on Cuban flights. For some twenty-two months this would be a daily contact. The officer in charge at the airport was Mr. Patrick Crowley and from him and his staff we were to receive the very finest cooperation.

The next day, 26 December, Mrs. Cooper returned to the airport vigil while I began the task of opening up Kendall and the 15th Road operations. We took possession of Mr. Ferré's house and began the struggle to get the necessary clearances from the Zoning Department, the Health Department, the Fire Department, and the Building Department, a struggle that we would repeat many times in the years to come. After much discussion, we finally convinced these public officials that we were trying to help the community and that we needed their help to solve the problems and overcome the difficulties. Often it seemed that the purpose of the applicable rules was to impede rather than to help.

Finally, we got all the necessary clearances to use Ferré's house as a reception center for teen-age boys, although the Fire Department would not allow anyone to sleep on the second floor until a fire escape was installed. We could not argue with this. I sent a man and a truck down to Camp Matecumbe, a summer youth camp owned by the Diocese of Miami in south Dade County, to borrow bunk-beds, tables, and chairs. We made arrangements for some household supplies and Mother Elizabeth of Assumption Academy agreed to allow our boys to eat lunch and supper in the school dining room. Breakfast we could handle in the house.

The 26th of December also brought several requests for placements of children already in Miami. Some of these were children on Mr. Baker's list who already had tourist visas and whose parents had decided not to wait for the student visas as time began to run out. They had been staying with friends in Miami who had put them up for a few days. At the airport, Mrs. Cooper waited for the plane from Cuba. This time her watch was not in vain. On the second flight, late in the evening, the first children arrived
and she took them under care, bringing them to St. Joseph’s Villa. Thus it was that Sixto Aquino and his sister, Vivian, were the first unaccompanied children actually taken under care by the agency. The waiting was over and the Cuban Children’s Program and Operation Pedro Pan were under way.

No new children came on the 27th. Two came on the 28th, none on the 29th. There were six on the 30th and 12 on the 31st. All these were met at the airport and taken under care. However, none of them had a student visa, and we could not understand what was delaying the operating of Mr. Baker’s plan. The mass influx that we had both feared and hoped for did not materialize.

On 29 December the first boys moved into the Ferré house, which was informally christened “Cuban Boys Home.” We still were without staff as such. Mr. Raymond McGraw, a social worker with the Catholic Welfare Bureau, was drafted as temporary housefather, alternating with me while the search for houseparents went on.

The time had come to make a formal request that the government implement Mr. Voorhees’ report of 19 December to President Eisenhower. As far as the Catholic Welfare Bureau was concerned, the program had already gone beyond what “private charity could do.” On 29 December Mr. Jones of the Welfare Planning Council and representatives of the three voluntary child-welfare agencies and the Florida State Department of Public Welfare met with Mr. Leo C. Beebe, special assistant to Mr. Voorhees, at the Cuban Refugee Center to discuss the situation.

The Cuban Refugee Center had been opened by Mr. Voorhees on 2 December 1960 in the old administration building of the Dade County Board of Public Instruction, 223 N.W. Third Avenue. Mr. Beebe had been borrowed by Mr. Voorhees from the Ford Motor Company and was at that time acting director of the center. The results of that meeting were summarized in a letter sent by Mr. Jones to Mr. Beebe. In addition, he reported that the agencies concerned felt that the situation as it existed then fell within the terms of the commitment made by Mr. Voorhees in his Interim Report of December 19. He requested the implementation of contractual arrangements between the licensed child-welfare agencies and the federal government for the care of dependent Cuban children.

We knew that we were breaking new ground with this request. Never before had the U.S. government funded foster care of refugee children in the United States. Previous child refugee programs had been supported by private organizations, church groups, and individual donations. Nobody in Mr. Voorhees’ office seemed to know how the recommendation made by him on 19 December should be implemented.
Finally, about the middle of January 1961, provision was made for the funds to be channeled to the child welfare agencies through the voluntary national resettlement agencies, such as Catholic Relief Services. It was the middle of February, however, before the first monies actually reached us, by which time we were almost $100,000 in debt. The financial base of the Cuban Children's Program was finally guaranteed on 1 March 1961 when contracts were signed between the three child welfare agencies and the Florida State Department of Public Welfare, acting as the agent of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. These contracts provided for the reimbursement of the agencies on a per diem per child basis at the rate of $6.50 per day for institutional care and $5.50 per day for foster care. These funds were for the care of the children in the United States. Operation Pedro Pan was funded by donations such as those referred to by Mr. Campbell in his letter.

Meanwhile, on Friday, 30 December, at about 6:30 a.m. I was awakened by a telephone call from Havana. To my surprise, the caller was Jim Baker. We had agreed not to call each other directly, since as a U.S. citizen in Cuba, he was in a very vulnerable position. He explained very briefly that the U.S. Embassy was holding up the issuance of student visas and that I was to call Mr. Frank Auerbach, of the Visa Section in the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., for details of the trouble. As soon as the office opened at 9:00 a.m. I called Mr. Auerbach and told him of the call from Havana and of our keen interest in the matter. He told me that he would personally look into the matter and return my call as soon as possible.

Within a few hours Mr. Auerbach called and advised me that the U.S. government was willing to issue the two hundred student visas requested by Mr. Baker's group, with one condition: a recognized and established organization in the United States would have to assume ultimate responsibility for the children. The Catholic Welfare Bureau would be most acceptable to the Department of State, as it was a licensed child welfare agency. This was the only way that the visas could be issued, since the U.S. government could not accept this responsibility. Mr. Auerbach knew that our agency had been promised funds by the government; nevertheless, he had to have an unconditional statement from us accepting this responsibility. A new element was thus introduced into the problem and I was faced with the moment of decision.

The rumors were strong in Cuba and in Miami that no children would be allowed to leave Cuba after 1 January. If so, these children would have to leave Cuba within two days. There was no time for consultation. I decided to sign the required statement on my own authority
and to accept the consequences if the whole thing backfired. Mr. Averbach asked me to send him two copies of the statement, mailing one to his office and one to his home because of the holidays. He promised to authorize the visas as soon as he had one of the copies in hand. Within the hour the copies were in the mail Special Delivery.

Time was running out, but not in the way we had expected. 1 January 1961 came and went with no new law about children. Castro did not cut off the exodus of Cuban children; instead he demanded that the U.S. Embassy staff in Havana be reduced to the size of the Cuban staff in Washington, from 120 to 15 persons. This brought a quick reaction in Washington from the President and on 3 January the United States broke diplomatic relations with the Cuban government. The Embassy in Havana and the Consulates in Havana and Santiago de Cuba were shut down, leaving no place in Cuba where people could secure visas for travel to the United States. For us it seemed to mark the end of Operation Pedro Pan. No unaccompanied children arrived in Miami on 1, 2, or 3 January. Our hopes revived when four came on the fourth.

The departure of the U.S. Chargé d’Affairs was the signal for most U.S. citizens to leave also. Mr. Jim Baker and his wife arrived in Miami on 5 January. He told us that there had been delays in getting the visas for the children, due to the number of requests, the slowness of communications with Washington, and the surveillance by the secret police. Nevertheless, at the last moment, as the Embassy was being shut down and the staff were actually burning papers in the traditional manner, he was allowed to stamp twenty-five passports himself.

To all of us who met that day in the Catholic Welfare Bureau, it seemed that the hopes of Mr. Baker and his friends to help Cuban parents send their children to the U.S. were now finished, since no more visas could be given in Cuba. In the general gloom as we all shared Mr. Baker’s disappointment, there were two bright spots—children could still come if they had visas since the rumored law had not materialized, and the Cuban Children’s Program was in operation. We could now return to our primary responsibility—the task of developing the program for the children already in Miami who needed care. That same day, Mr. Baker became a temporary housefather at the Cuban Boys Home, in the old Ferré house on S.E. 15th Road.

THE “VISA WAIVER”

The closing of the U.S. Embassy marked the end of the first phase of the Operation Pedro Pan. Despite our disappointment, we quickly proceeded with our plans for the Cuban Children’s Program to meet the needs of the many children already in Miami who we knew needed our
CUBAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

We also knew that we could still expect many more children from Cuba, since a great many Cuban families had passports, with multiple entry Tourist B1 Visas. As soon as their parents knew that care was available in Miami these children would come. We had much to do. New staff had to be recruited, houseparents for the Cuban Boys Home and for Kendall, cooks and janitors, social workers, clerks and typists, and a good bookkeeper. I believe that it was at this point that we made a decision which was to be very important for the administration of the program in the future. The Cuban Children’s Program became a completely separate department of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, with its own staff directly responsible to the executive director. The original purpose of this was to protect the regular program of the Catholic Welfare Bureau from being swallowed up in the new project. It also meant that the regular programs were not affected by the periodic evaluations and audits carried out by agencies of the federal government.

Mrs. Louise Cooper was the first person formally assigned to the Cuban Children’s Program. We were also able to locate a Cuban man as a resident housefather at the Cuban Boys Home. This man, Angel Carrón, was to become so identified with the home that it became known as “Casa Carrón” to hundreds of Cuban youths. In a few weeks he was joined by his wife, Nina. The first houseparents at Kendall were Mr. and Mrs. Fernando Pruna. Since the vacant buildings there needed some repairs and maintenance to make them habitable, the county welfare gave us temporary use of Cottage No. 1 in their main complex. Because it was located right in the middle of their own operations close to their home for the aged, this proved less than satisfactory, and at once there were complaints that the Cuban children were noisy and undisciplined.

In the meantime Mr. Baker had not given up on his plans to help those children caught in Cuba without visas. He had organized a group of trustworthy friends in Havana to keep up the effort at that end. A plan was devised which would allow them to send children to Kingston, Jamaica, traveling on a visa granted by the British Embassy in Havana. They would then be given a visa for the United States by the Consul General in Kingston and from there come to Miami. For this we needed the cooperation of the British government and the assurance that there would be no long wait in Kingston for the U.S. visa. We would also need a place for the children to stay at least one night there. We thought the plan worth trying, even though it would be slower and more expensive than the direct Havana to Miami route. However, it would also give the impression to the Cuban authorities that the children were going to Jamaica to school and not to the United States.

The month of January proved critical in the development of our
two programs, the Cuban Children’s Program and Operation Pedro Pan. Each day brought new developments. By the end of the month the programs were well under way and there would be no fundamental change, despite the fantastic growth and development, in either one. It was then that I began to keep a diary covering most of the month. Each night, when I was ready to go to bed, I used a dictaphone to record the major happenings of the day. The following chronicle is based on this record, supplemented by appointment books and other records in the files of the Catholic Welfare Bureau.

*Friday, 6 January:* Mr. Baker, Mrs. Cooper, and I gathered in my office at the Catholic Welfare Bureau to discuss the situation. Mr. Baker told us about the last days in Havana, the difficulties in getting visas for the children’s passports. We discussed the prospect for the future and Jim Baker talked about his Jamaica plan. We decided to call Mr. Frank Auerbach, our contact at the State Department in Washington. He was interested, and since I was scheduled to be in Washington on the 8th to attend the White House Conference on the Aging as a Florida state delegate, Mr. Auerbach invited me to call him on my arrival. Since it would be Sunday, he asked that I call him at home, which I took to be another sign of his great interest in our program. Seven children came today.

*Saturday, 7 January:* I spent this day at the Boys Home, helping to get it organized, getting to know the youngsters. Two more children arrived at the airport.

*Sunday, 8 January:* I flew to Washington and upon arrival, I called Mr. Auerbach as he had asked. He made arrangements for me to meet him outside one of the side doors of the State Department at 2:00 p.m. It was a bright, cold winter afternoon, and the streets around the State Department were completely deserted. Somehow the weather, the day, the time, the happenings of the past weeks all combined to create an atmosphere of intrigue and conspiracy. Promptly at two, Mr. Auerbach drove up and we met for the first time. We entered the building and walked along deserted corridors to the office of Mr. Robert F. Hale, Director of the Visa Office, who was waiting for us. We spent about three hours discussing the possibility of bringing the children out via Jamaica on the two KLM flights a week among other possibilities. It was then that I heard for the first time the words “visa waiver.”

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*When the United States broke off diplomatic and consular relations with Cuba on January 3, 1961, the closing of the Embassy at Havana and the Consulate*
Mr. Auerbach proposed at our meeting that on the petition of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, the State Department would grant visa waivers for children coming directly from Cuba. This would enable the airlines to board them in Havana on direct flights to Miami without running the risk of a fine of $1,000 in each case for bringing a passenger to the United States without a valid visa. The question was whether the Cuban authorities would cooperate in allowing such a child to leave. This we could only find out by trying. At any rate, it offered another way of continuing Operation Pedro Pan.

The meeting ended on the following note. The State Department would take up the question of visa waivers with the Justice Department early the following morning. The matter of transit visas for Jamaica would also be discussed with the British Embassy. I was to check with the Church in Jamaica on the possibility of enlisting its help in meeting the children in Kingston, getting them to the U.S. Consulate, putting them up overnight, and then sending them on to Miami the next day. As soon as Mr. Auerbach had any news he was to call me at my hotel. He asked that I wait for the call on Monday and not attend the meetings of the White House Conference on the Aging. In Miami, two more children arrived.

Monday, 9 January: I called the Diocese of Kingston in Jamaica by telephone the first thing in the morning and talked to Father William A. Connolly, the chancellor. I told him that we needed his help for Cuban children and he thought that something could be worked out, since they had both a boys' and a girls' boarding school. He also told me that they were beginning to get some Cuban refugees. He would talk to the Bishop. I told him that as soon as I got clearance, I could fly down and discuss details with him and explain completely what we had in mind. I then called our office in Miami and asked our Supervisor of Child Welfare, Miss Rachel Erwin, to be ready to go to Jamaica with me the next day, Tuesday, 10 January. The KLM flights came in on Tuesday and Thursday and I wanted to be in Kingston on the next flight.

During the afternoon I received the call I was expecting from the

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at Santiago shut off the means of escape for the thousands of Cubans besieging these offices for visas. Relatives, friends, and social agencies soon began to ask the Department of State to take emergency action in behalf of these peoples.

"As a matter of sound and humanitarian national policy, and in keeping with the traditional role of the U.S. as a haven for those fleeing persecution, the Department concluded that it should ask the Department of Justice to act jointly in waiving the visa requirement, pursuant to Section 212 (d) (4) (A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, in individual cases involving specific elements of unforeseen emergency." Testimony of Robert F. Hale, Director, Visa Office, Department of State.
State Department. We were given the go-ahead on both proposals. We could bring the children out by way of Kingston on British visas, and then come to Miami on visa waivers. We could also try to bring them out directly from Havana on visa waivers. We were given a very big concession regarding the visa waivers which was to make our program of distribution in Cuba much easier. This was blanket authority to issue visa waivers to all children between the ages of six and 16. For children between 16 and 18 years of age, we would have to submit their names and birthdates to Washington for prior security clearances. We could not do anything for a child under six nor for anyone over 18. All of this was verbal; we had nothing in writing.

I immediately called Miami to confirm the trip to Kingston for the next day and to let Jim Baker and Mrs. Cooper know the new possibilities we had. That same evening I flew back to Miami. Meanwhile, Mr. Baker called his contacts in Havana and told them to call on the British Embassy for help. Copies of Mr. Baker's lists were brought up to date, so that Miss Erwin could take them with her to Kingston the next day. Our flight was scheduled for 8:30 a.m. so everything had to be prepared at once. Three more children arrived today.

**Tuesday, 10 January:** I met Rachel Erwin at the airport and we boarded the BWIA flight for Jamaica. Rachel was rather upset when she learned that we would be flying over Cuba. She wondered how we would explain away all the lists of Cuban children we were carrying if by chance we made a forced landing. We landed safely, however, in Kingston and were met by Father Connolly, who took us to lunch at the bishop's house. There we gave them full details of our mission. Father Connolly had already talked to the principals of the two boarding schools, St. George College and Immaculate Conception College. The principal of the latter was Mother Lucy, former principal of Corpus Christi School in Miami and a blood-sister of Mother Patrina who had been with me in Homestead for several years. Bishop McElaney, the Bishop of Kingston, assured us that we would have full cooperation.

Next stop on our schedule was to return to the airport to see the arrival of the KLM flight from Havana. While we were waiting, a Cuban man came up to me and asked if I was there to meet the children from Cuba. Needless to say his question was a shock, since the whole Operation Pedro Pan was supposed to be a secret and we were trying to avoid giving the Cuban authorities the impression that there was a wide-scale organized effort to help children leave the island. We were sure that this would bring about reprisals against parents and others in Cuba who were cooperating. I tried to look innocent and told him that we were simply
curious to see the flight. But by now we were beginning to feel that we were really involved in an international intrigue. We then went to see the two boarding schools where the children would stay and where we were to spend the next couple of nights, Miss Erwin at Immaculate Conception and I at St. George.

Back in Miami two more children came. We learned that the friends left behind in Havana by Mr. Baker were deliberately sending out the children in small numbers so as not to attract attention.

**Wednesday, 11 January:** Father Connolly, who was by now as enthusiastic and as emotionally involved in the project as we were, took us to meet the U.S. consul general and the managers of Pan American and KLM airlines. The consul general had been alerted by the Department of State and had already talked to the Jamaican officials and secured their full cooperation. By noon, we had done all we could and Father Connolly took us sightseeing for the afternoon.

**Thursday, 12 January:** I returned to Miami, leaving Rachel Erwin in Kingston to wait for the first children to arrive. She and Father Connolly met the KLM flight on the chance that some children might be on it, but there were none.

**Friday, 13 January:** After almost a week's absence, I found myself back in the office. It had been a very fruitful week—each day two or three children had arrived—and it looked as if our Operation Pedro Pan was going to continue. There were urgent problems that needed settling in Miami. We had a total of 50 children under care in three different locations—the Cuban Boys Home, St. Joseph's Villa, and Cottage No. 1 in Kendall. They were for the most part teen-age boys.

The most urgent problem was school. Since it was the middle of the year, both public and Catholic schools were refusing to enroll them unless they had previously attended American-type schools and could speak English. This posed few difficulties for those children who had been pupils of Ruston Academy and the American Dominican Academy in Havana and spoke excellent English, but many of the children had attended Cuban schools. We spent much of Friday discussing what we should do with them. Everyone was still hopeful that within a few months these children would be able to return to Cuba.

Someone suggested that we should open our own school in Miami, using Cuban teachers and following the Cuban secondary school curriculum, the bachillerato program. I knew that the Centro Hispano Católico, located in the old Gesu School building, had empty classrooms. So I made arrangements to meet with Sister Miriam, O.P., the Supervisor of Social Services, there the next morning.
Saturday, 14 January: This was a day of great activity in getting the bachillerato program of the Centro Hispano Católico organized. The following report was dictated by me that same evening and gives some idea of how quickly we were able to get things organized to meet newly identified needs. It should be remembered that all this took place in the midst of great activity in the overall Cuban refugee program.

The problem of secondary education for Cuban refugee children in Miami has been brought to a head by the fact that the Catholic Welfare Bureau has 50 children under care as of today. We have been faced with the problem of getting these children in school; both Catholic and the public American high school systems are unable to provide them with the type of education they require. I was told last night that when these children return to Cuba they will be required to begin their secondary education all over again or at least at the point where they left off upon their arrival in this country. The American high school curriculum is of no use to them as far as continuing their Cuban education is concerned.

This morning I discussed plans with Sister Miriam of the Centro Hispano Católico specifically around the possibility of establishing a Cuban secondary school at the Centro Hispano Católico. Sister's enthusiasm encouraged me and I asked about the possibility of having some of the Dominican Sisters who have lately come from Havana assigned to this work. Sister thought that there was a possibility. She told me that four classrooms are available and a science laboratory at the Centro Hispano Católico and that we could get a program going there.

I talked with Jim Baker, director of Ruston Academy, about the possibility of this program and of getting Cuban teachers to set up this bachillerato. He was enthusiastic in his support. At nine o'clock this morning I called Bishop Carroll and told him of our plans and asked his approval and his help in getting the service of at least two Dominican Sisters who were experienced in this work. He promised to call Mother Emmanuel (the Provincial Superior of the Dominican Sisters of Albany, who had operated the American Dominican Academy in Havana until the break in diplomatic relations and who also had operated the Centro Hispano Católico) and ask for them.

At 2:30 p.m. the Bishop called me and told me we had the go-ahead signal and that we could expect two Sisters, one of whom would be Mother Daniel and the other Sister Ana María, both of whom are in Miami at the present time. I then discussed with the Bishop the opening date and at my suggestion the date was moved up to Wednesday, 18 January instead of the following Monday which the Bishop had suggested. The report of this has been given to the Voice for publication and on Monday the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, Monsignor William F.
McKeever, the former Director of Secondary Education of the City of Havana, Dr. Ernesto Garcia Tuduri, Mr. Jim Baker, and the Sisters will meet at Centro to complete arrangements, the details and plans.18

The same afternoon Jim Baker and I reviewed the plans for bringing the children out of Cuba. The latest word from Havana was that the British ambassador had agreed to stamp all the children's passports with a British visa and that even the children who were to come directly to the United States would be supposedly in transit to some British possession, such as Nassau, Bahamas. This was thought to give them a better chance to leave Cuba without questions being asked, since the Cuban government was anxious to maintain friendly relations with Britain. The children would also have the visa waiver required for them to board the plane. Today was the first in eight days with no new children arriving.

My former housekeeper in Homestead, Mrs. Mary L. Larkin, agreed to come and act as housekeeper in the Cuban Boys Home, pending the arrival of the new houseparents. I talked to Rachel Erwin in Kingston. I asked her to return to Miami as she was more needed there than down there. I felt that Father Connolly would be able to handle the program at that end. She told me that they were expecting, according to KLM, the first children to arrive 17 January.

Sunday, 15 January: Today we had a long discussion with the boys at the Cuban Boys Home regarding the school they would attend. Many of them were disappointed to learn that they would go to a Cuban school, because they had heard that American high schools were easier and the course a year shorter. I told them that if they were still here in September, they would all be in an American high school. One boy, a student of Ruston, was to go to Archbishop Curley High School and some of the younger ones to Sts. Peter and Paul Elementary School. No children came today.

Monday, 16 January: I was in Tallahassee all day, but when I returned, Mr. Baker reported to me that the meeting on the bachillerato had been most fruitful and that no real difficulties stood in the way of the program. One problem concerned textbooks. Word was sent to Havana to have the children bring their textbooks with them whenever possible. There were two children on today's flight.

Tuesday, 17 January: Mr. Baker reported his first problems with discipline at the Boys Home. Last night the boys had stayed up after the usual lights out in an apparent test of authority and many had missed breakfast, going out to a restaurant without permission. Mr. Baker and

18 Bryan O. Walsh, unpublished diary.
I talked to them and explained that we were in place of their parents and that we would have to have their cooperation. At Mr. Baker's suggestion we asked them to form a sort of Student Council who could assist the house administration in matters of this sort. They elected one of the quietest and least likely boys as their president. Baker and I discussed at length the whole question of rules and discipline, Cuban customs of child-rearing, the type and use of punishments and sanctions. I felt that this would be where our first cultural clash would occur, both in the house and in school. I was glad I had a few months the previous summer in intercultural studies at the Catholic University of Puerto Rico. It gave me at least some insight into what I could expect as well as an elementary knowledge of Spanish, which was improving rapidly. One child came today.

*Wednesday, 18 January:* This was registration day in the new program at the Centro, and I took several of the boys to school myself and introduced them to their new teachers. The program went well, and in addition to our own children, several children living with their parents or relatives took advantage of the opportunity offered.

We received word from Kingston that the first seven children had arrived there the previous afternoon on schedule and would be coming to Miami that same afternoon. Miss Ariela Carbonell, a new social worker aide on our rapidly growing staff, accompanied me to the airport to meet them on the 3:00 p.m. Pan Am flight. They were four girls and three boys, three of them being brothers and sisters. Our work of the previous week had not been in vain. At least seven children had managed to leave Cuba without U.S. visas and arrive in the United States. One of the girls had relatives waiting for her. Her brothers stayed with us, one for the Boys Home, and the younger one for St. Joseph's Villa. This was usually the case. Relatives and friends would take the little girls, but no one wanted teen-age boys. The other girls went to St. Joseph's Villa and the boy to our home. Two more children arrived this same night on a direct flight from Cuba.

*Thursday, 19 January:* The formal opening of the bachillerato program was a Mass celebrated by Monsignor McKeever at which I preached my first sermon in Spanish. Mrs. Larkin reported for duty at the Cuban Boys Home, where we now had 18 boys. This day we were also asked by two people for help in getting the children of relatives out of Cuba. We told them that we were working on a program, but that it would be several weeks before we could do anything about it. We had decided to work only with those we knew until we were sure that the system was really working. One child came today.
Friday, 20 January: The new bookkeeper for the Cuban Children’s Program was hired. He was Mr. Jesús González, lately arrived from Havana, who would in time become the head of the accounting office of the Catholic Welfare Bureau and would make great contributions to the success of the program. I also attended a meeting of the Welfare Planning Council, the agency which had helped so much a month earlier in requesting federal funds for our agencies. It was now in a major crisis because of the failure of the United Fund. Its budget had been cut back so badly that it was reduced to a staff of two, the executive director and a secretary. This case illustrates the serious state of social welfare service in Miami even without the refugee influx. The manager of the Pan American office in Havana visited our office and asked help for a child. The child had a student visa but needed an I-20 immigration form to go with it.

News came today that five more children had arrived the day before in Jamaica. A letter was also received from Father Connolly reassuring us that all was going very well. That end of the program seemed to be working smoothly.

One child also arrived on the direct flight. There was some excitement about the Jamaica group. Since one of the children would turn eighteen on 22 January, she had to be in the U.S. by that date, or she might face a long wait in Kingston for a regular visa. Children between six and 18 coming through Kingston on our program were still being admitted on the visa waiver. This girl was Sandra Carbonell, the sister of a Catholic Welfare Bureau social worker aide. She made it just on time, Sunday morning.

Our program was growing and I was concerned that there was no sign of any funds from the federal government despite the promises of Mr. Voorhees. On 18 January he had made his final report to President Eisenhower, who was going out of office. The new president was John F. Kennedy, and with him came a new administration which we hoped would be more responsive to the needs of the refugees. We were existing on monies borrowed from other funds for day-to-day expenses and the bills were beginning to pile up. Members of the Diocesan Chancery personnel were getting nervous, since they really doubted that we would ever receive any federal funds. The national Catholic refugee agency, Catholic Relief Services, had established its offices in the Cuban Refugee Center, and its programs for the resettlement of refugees was now in operation. I knew that they too were depending on federal funds. So I called the national director, Bishop Edward E. Swansstrom, for advice on how to shake loose the money. He offered to make the necessary
contacts and later assured me that reimbursement would be forthcoming.

**Saturday, 21 January:** At Kendall we decided that we could accommodate about 100 children. We wanted to move the children out of Cottage No. 1 and we also knew that we needed more staff. Among the U.S. citizens who had come from Cuba after the break in diplomatic relations were several Ursuline nuns, who had operated the Ursuline Academy in Havana for many years. They were staying at the Assumption Academy awaiting reassignment. I talked to Mother Thomas, their Superior, and asked them to take over the Kendall operation for us. The advantages seemed great. They were accustomed to dealing with Cuban children. They spoke Spanish and yet they were Americans and therefore used to working in this country. The one difficulty was that this was the pre-Vatican II era and their rules did not allow them to work with boys. I went to the bishop for help. As always, he responded at once and went to visit Mother Thomas that same evening and brought with him Archbishop (now Cardinal) Vagnozzi, the Apostolic Delegate, who was on a short visit to Miami and greatly interested in the Cuban refugee situation. I was present. The bishop and the archbishop assured Mother Thomas that times were different and that this was an emergency situation in which they had an obligation to help the people with whom they worked for so long in Havana. We would get houseparents to assist them with the boys, but they could supervise the whole Kendall operation. The Ursulines agreed to take over Kendall.

The buildings at Kendall consisted of three separate structures, a girls' cottage, a double-wing boys' cottage, with kitchen and dining room in the middle, and a new four-classroom building with plenty of recreation area around. It was about a mile from the main complex buildings and thus suitable for an independent operation. We would not run into conflicts with the county welfare programs which included a home for the aged and a hospital in addition to the county children's home.

**Sunday, 22 January:** This was the busiest twenty-four hour period yet in receiving children from Cuba. Seventeen children came into Miami in the twenty-four hours ending at midnight Sunday, 11 directly from Cuba and six from Kingston. Not all the children required care. Usually about half of those arriving had some relatives or friends waiting for them. However, almost as many already in Miami were requesting care.

**Monday, 23 January:** Nine more children arrived directly from Cuba on visa waivers. The number of people coming to the office got bigger every day as word spread in the Cuban colony that we had a way of getting children out of Cuba. Fifteen children were taken into foster care today, the biggest number to date.
Tuesday, 24 January: We now had 24 boys in the Cuban Boys Home. Slow progress was being made by the contractor in installing the fire escape. All the boys were still sleeping downstairs. Even though we could use the upstairs during the day for recreation, it was not a very satisfactory arrangement. It would be another week before it was completed. I noticed that the boys were beginning to regard the house as their home. Only three had requested permission to visit relatives over the weekend, which was a change. The first days they could not wait to get out of the house.

The bachillerato program continued to grow. As of this date 60 children were enrolled, of whom 30 were under the care of the Catholic Welfare Bureau.

Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Baker, and I reviewed the program and we decided that Mr. Baker and a friend would take over responsibility for the airport details, meeting all the flights from Cuba and those from Kingston. Because of the necessity for secrecy, we had minimum communications with Havana and therefore we never knew what to expect. We had eight more children who needed foster care this day.

From the beginning we had known that we could rely on the Catholic agencies around the country to provide foster care for the children. In December, Philadelphia Catholic Charities had agreed to accept 40 children under 12 years of age. Mrs. Cooper reported that the first five would travel the next day. While this was a big help and the first breakthrough in sending children to other dioceses, it was a limited answer. We really needed placements for teen-age boys. But again the pattern that was to prevail for the rest of the program was already apparent. Everyone wanted little girls, and maybe little boys, but nobody wanted teen-age boys and few were willing to take them.

This same afternoon I visited Kendall to inspect the operation there in Cottage No. 1 and to see what was being done to prepare the other buildings.

Wednesday, 25 January: We had a staff conference, including the houseparents, to draw up some general policies for the many teen-agers we now had under care. Present were Sister Louis Gonzaga from St. Joseph's Villa, Mr. and Mrs. Fernando Pruna from Kendall, Mr. Jim Baker from the Cuban Boys Home, Mr. Raymond McGraw, Mrs. Cooper, and myself from the Catholic Welfare Bureau. Our problem was twofold: (1) we had rarely had a teen-ager under care before in the Catholic Welfare Bureau and we never had had them in group care; (2) we had the cultural differences and the problem of helping Cuban teen-agers adjust to life in the United States. We considered items such as allow-
ances, school expenses, clothing, purchases, visits of relatives, and visits to relatives.

We received word that there would be a National Resettlement Conference held in Miami the following Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday to boost the resettlement process. Among those invited were Catholic Charities Directors from all over the country. This would give us an opportunity to push for foster-home placements, especially for teen-age boys.

Tonight we had our first medical emergency. One of the children who had arrived the previous week and was staying with friends in Hialeah was knocked down by an automobile and hurt. He was in Hialeah Hospital and the hospital needed medical authorization which his friends could not give. I called Judge William R. Culbreath of the Juvenile Court and he took jurisdiction, declaring the boy dependent, and gave the necessary authorization to the doctor and the hospital. This was another one for the policy manual, which was growing every day.

Thursday, 26 January: We purchased the first vehicle, a used car. At the Cuban Boys Home we noticed the first signs of difficulty within the group when one boy asked to be moved to a foster home, claiming the other boys were picking on him. Up to now the boys had been nice to each other since they all had felt themselves to be Cuban brothers suffering together in exile. Now that they were beginning to settle in, things were returning to normal “boy life.” Today we took 14 children into care—all new arrivals at the airport.

Friday, 27 January: This day I spent in the office catching up on my correspondence. The rate of arrivals continued high with ten children today.

Saturday, 28 January: The Cuban Boys Home fire escape was finished today and we could now use the upstairs bedrooms. It was a short-lived relief since 13 new boys arrived this same day and we had no beds for them in Kendall. So we took them to the Boys Home where we now had a total of 42. It was clear that we had to step up our efforts to place children around the country.

Sunday, 29 January: The National Resettlement Conference got under way on this day, and the delegates were greeted by some 2,000 Cuban refugees in Dade County Auditorium. The whole effort of the conference was to convince the rest of the country that the refugees posed a national problem and that Miami needed the help of the nation in solving it.

One problem facing us was how to elicit this support for our Cuban children without breaking our secrecy on Operation Pedro Pan. During the conference we decided not to talk about the children, but to work
quietly with individuals who could help, especially the Diocesan Directors of Catholic Charities, most of whom, including the Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Monsignor John O'Grady, were in Miami for the conference. Some of the media people, newspaper reporters and the like, were beginning to get wind of what was going on. We admitted to the presence of unaccompanied Cuban children, but would say nothing about helping them get here. We did indicate that the less said about that the better, since we were convinced that any publicity would have quick repercussions in Cuba. Today was another big day at the airport with 12 more children.

*Monday, 30 January:* The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Mr. Abraham Ribicoff, arrived in Miami to look into the Cuban refugee situation on behalf of the new president. I did not attend the public meeting because I did not want to talk publicly about the children. The secretary asked for me and asked some questions about child welfare needs and it was just as well that I was not present. I made an appointment to meet with him privately, together with Bishop Carroll and Sister Miriam from the Centro Hispano Católico.

*Tuesday, 31 January:* At a closed meeting of the Catholic Relief Service for their diocesan resettlement directors, I spoke at length about the need we had for foster family and group care for unaccompanied children. I stressed the need for keeping secret our participation in getting children out of Cuba.

One of the first dioceses to respond to our appeal was our neighbor and mother diocese, the Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida. I met with Father Sager and Father Lenihan to discuss turning their St. John's Youth Camp at Switzerland, Florida, into a home and school for teenage boys. Seven children came yesterday from Cuba and seven more today.

*Wednesday, 1 February:* I met with Secretary Ribicoff and gave him a written report of the children's program stressing our desire for no publicity. In my report I wrote:

*Current Situation:* For the last two weeks the program has been functioning very smoothly. As of today 174 children have come in (from Cuba). Of these 53 have been and are being cared for by relatives and friends, the rest by the Catholic Welfare Bureau except for two by the Jewish Family Service. Also 15 children who arrived earlier and had been living alone in Miami have also been taken under care by the Catholic Welfare Bureau.

*Arrangements for Care:* As of January 31st 120 children were under the direct care of the Catholic Welfare Bureau in
three group homes, three boarding schools, and some foster homes. In addition 20 have been sent to the Catholic Children's Bureau, Philadelphia. It is felt that only about 120 can be cared for in Miami and therefore arrangements have been made to have the children now arriving cared for under the auspices of the Catholic Charities Bureaus throughout the country. Accommodations for more than the 510 currently on the list (Mr. Baker's) are guaranteed.

Secretary Ribicoff told me that he had asked the Children's Bureau to work with us on details of a purchase-of-care contract, which would formalize the relationship between our agencies and the federal government.

Thus it was, 39 days after the first fruitless wait at the airport on Christmas Day, the Cuban Children's Program and Operation Pedro Pan were now in full swing. We were taking care of children already in Miami; we were helping children leave Cuba directly for Miami and via Jamaica; we were placing children in foster care throughout the country; and our relationship with the federal government was about to be placed on a formal basis. Come what might our program was now on a firm foundation.

We could not read the future. We still shared the common hope that it would not be too long, maybe a year at the most, until these children could be reunited with their parents. We still were thinking in terms of a few hundred children coming from Cuba. We were pretty sure that sooner or later the Cuban authorities would discover what was going on, and put a stop to the exodus. It was too early for us to realize that all these assumptions would within a few months be proved wrong. In the meantime, however, we had a job to do. The next period would be one of expansion.

We would continue to grow in all aspects of the program during the following 21 months. We would receive more than 14,000 children at the airport. We would take 7,464 children under care. We would place them in foster care in 35 states under the auspices of 95 different child welfare agencies. We would set up three large reception centers in Miami and establish two group-care facilities for teen-age boys in Miami with a State Department of Public Welfare authorized population of 1,500 children and a total staff in Miami of 465 persons. We would do all of this before the Cuban Missile Crisis shut off commercial air traffic on 22 October, 1962.

We were able to keep all of this out of the newspaper until 9 March 1962 when the Cleveland Plain Dealer decided to break the spirit of co-
operation and prepared a story for publication. When all efforts to suppress the story failed, we agreed to a press release giving the basic story but omitting all references to what was being done within Cuba.

Operation Pedro Pan ended with the October 1962 Missile Crisis, but the work of caring for Cuban children was to go on for many years. As this is being written we have completed ten years of operation. We have a total of 165 children under care and have been operating more or less at this same level since shortly after the Freedom Flights began on 1 December 1965. The parents of our children were given priority on these flights and within the first six months of the flights from Varadero, the majority of our children had been reunited with their parents.

Today we continue to receive new children under care. The numbers are much fewer, but the program is the same. We offer care and protection to unaccompanied Cuban refugee children and we expect to continue to do this as long as there are Cuban refugee children.

One of our recent cases was a seventeen-year-old Cuban boy, of campesino background, who swam five miles across Guantánamo Bay to the U.S. Naval Base in order to come to the United States. This boy was five years old when Castro took over. All he ever knew was the Castro régime. He is from the sector of the Cuban population which has been identified as one of the chief beneficiaries of the Revolution. Yet he left his family, which he dearly loves, and all that he knew. He came and his family agreed to his coming, because they knew that he would be taken care of here on his arrival.

Ten years after its inception the Cuban Children’s Program continues to offer to Cuban parents and their children an alternative to Communist indoctrination, and that choice is still being made after ten years of indoctrination.

**Epilogue**

Sixto Aquino, who with his sister were the first children to come on 26 December 1960, wrote me a letter dated 12 May 1971 in which he describes those events:

> As to our feelings on December 26, Vivian and I remember being scared and sad and also to have had a sense of an adventure about to begin.

> After we left St. Joseph’s Villa, we went to live at the home of cousins of my mother’s, Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Santos of Hialeah, Fla. Vivian attended Immaculata and St. Patrick’s High Schools, graduating in 1963. Since, she has attended Carron Williams Business School in Miami and the University of Maryland. She married Eduardo Latour, a professional photog-
rapher in 1967 and became the mother of a daughter, Vivian in 1969. She is expecting a second child within the month.


### CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 January 1959</td>
<td>Castro assumes power in Cuba.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1959–June</td>
<td>Gradually increasing exodus of Cuban refugees to Miami.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 June 1960</td>
<td>Foreign-owned oil refineries confiscated.</td>
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<td>6 August 1960</td>
<td>U.S. sugar mills seized.</td>
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<td>September 1960</td>
<td>Cuban refugees noticed in Miami. Meeting at Centro Hispano Católico to discuss means of helping them.</td>
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<td>14 October 1960</td>
<td>Urban Reform Law promulgated in Cuba.</td>
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<td>October 1960</td>
<td>Series of community meetings to alert government officials to needs of Cuban refugees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1960</td>
<td>Mr. Tracy Voorhees is appointed by President Eisenhower to look into Miami situation. $1,000,000.00 in Mutual Security Funds is allocated for emergency aid.</td>
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<td>November 1960</td>
<td>First Cuban refugee child in need of foster care is brought to the Catholic Welfare Bureau. Cuban mother brings two children to Key West and returns to Cuba.</td>
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<td>22 November 1960</td>
<td>Welfare Planning Council of Dade County adopts resolution calling for federal government to establish a federally-funded program for Cuban refugees.</td>
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<td>2 December 1960</td>
<td>Cuban Refugee Center in Miami opened by U.S. government.</td>
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12 December 1960  Mr. James Baker from Havana is in Miami seeking help for unaccompanied Cuban children.

15 December 1960  First list of unaccompanied children is received in Miami from Mr. Baker.

24 December 1960  Word received that first children would arrive on 25 December.

25 December 1960  No children.

26 December 1960  First children arrived in Miami under Operation Pedro Pan.

29 December 1960  First shelter for unaccompanied Cuban refugee children in Miami is opened.

29 December 1960  The Welfare Planning Council requests funds from the federal government for the care of Cuban children.

3 January 1961  United States breaks diplomatic relations with Cuba.

9 January 1961  Visa waiver program approved by the State Department.

25 January 1961  First unaccompanied Cuban children to be relocated out of Miami left for Philadelphia.

3 February 1961  U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare is assigned responsibility by President Kennedy for all Cuban refugee programs.

22 October 1962  Cuban Missile Crisis. Last commercial flight between Havana and Miami—the end of Operation Pedro Pan.

1 December 1965  Freedom Flights between Varadero and Miami begin with first priority for parents of unaccompanied Cuban children already in United States.