

Miami's 'Havana' Story of Success

By E. V. W. JONES
(States-Item Special Writer)
MIAMI—You are in Florida, but the voices around you are Spanish.

"English Spoken Here," reads the sign in the shop window.

"Your question is answered. 'Uno momento. I no speak English.'" And a child of school age is called over to serve as interpreter.

This is New Havana, in the heart of Miami. It is a thriving city within a city, with a population of 225,000 and still growing. Twice each day, five days a week, "Freedom Flights" paid for by the U.S. government airlift 160 more Cubans into political exile from their communist homeland.

MANY ARE relocated in other cities after arrival in Miami. If their families are

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here, they stay. Or after arriving in Boston, Toledo or some other place, they long to be with their own kind in a climate similar to Havana's they return to Miami.

Here, the displaced Cubans have written an amazing success story. Dr. Bernar-

do Benes, himself an exile and now vice president of the Washington Federal Savings & Loan Association, describes how successful his compatriots have become.

"They arrived with the clothing on their backs, nothing more," said Benes. "Their homes, and possessions, are

(Editor's Note: The way of life of 15,000 Cuban refugees who settled in New Orleans will be reported in articles in the States-Item tomorrow, Wednesday and Thursday.)

seized in Cuba and everything of value is taken from them at the airport before they leave.

"BUT THEY find opportunity in a free land. Today the income of the Cuban population in Dade County is \$400 million a year and growing. This is greater than the total income of any capital city in Central America and of the capitals of Bolivia, Paraguay or Ecuador."

Behind this success lies the Cubans' willingness to work, hard and long. And to help one another. When they first began to arrive in large numbers in 1965, they were given financial assistance by the U.S. government until they could become self-supporting. The maximum relief payment was \$100 a month, no matter how large the family, for one year.

Former supreme court justices, high government officials, distinguished professional men became waiters and busboys — anything for a living. A diner's dishes might be cleared from the table of a downtown restaurant by a former senator, mayor or governor of a province.

All that has changed.

TAMIAMI TRAIL, or S.W. Eighth Street, was a rundown street of vacant stores and for sale signs when the Cubans arrived. Today it is the main-

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stream of New Havana, with 386 retail stores operated by Cubans. Some 6,000 businesses in the area are Cuban-owned.

Most gasoline stations, auto repair shops, upholstery and carpenter shops are Cuban. Tree trimming, house painting and a great deal of home building is done by Cubans. Cuban architects design lovely, expensive red-tiled and patioed homes for Cuban builders to erect.

Salesgirls, secretaries, telephone operators, receptionists nearly all speak with a Spanish accent.

DAVID EGOZI and Eugenio Ramos arrived with nothing. Today their Miami company, Suave Shoes, employs 1,100 exiles and turns out 20 million pairs of shoes a year for sale throughout the United States.

Miami is second only to New York in the manufacture of resort fashions and women's wear.

Dr. Ernesto Freyre, a civic leader in the Latin community, explains: "Always, in Cuba, the women make the clothes for the babies, for the family. They like to sew. But they have never worked in a factory. Here, they need the money and they enjoy making the clothes for everybody to buy. It is big business."

Miami is gaining a reputation as one of the finest cities in America for dining out. The reason is the several dozen Spanish restaurants founded by Cuban exiles and featuring strolling musicians, clicking castanets, swirling skirts, good food and excellent service.

EVERY CUBAN has a story.

"I came on the freedom flight," said Armando Delgado, operator of a supermarket. "It was 1961. I could bring three pieces of clothing but no money, no jewelry, nothing of value. The Communists kept that and seized our home, our furniture in Havana."

"My wife, Esperanza, and our two children could not come with me but took a plane to Spain. I worked here for three years as a waiter, then I went to New York and

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CUBA, U.S.A....



—Miami-Metro Dept. of Tourism photos.
A STREET SCENE IN HAVANA? Not so, this is a view of Southwest Eighth st. near downtown Miami, Fla. Goods and services of all kinds are Latin-oriented here, from movies to jewelry houses.



THE ART OF CIGAR MAKING, for which Havana once was famous, has been transplanted by Cuban refugees to factories in Miami. Some of the tobacco is U. S. grown, while some comes from Central America. (See story on Page 1.)