

Migration Is Costly For Cubans

The following article is based on a series of reports by Al Burt of the Miami Herald during recent visits to Spain and Cuba.

MADRID—From the waiting lists of thousands seeking to leave Cuba through the legal routes to exile, about 500 "lucky ones" a month arrive in Spain — penniless, dependent on help from friends and the government.

There are two Free World exits for the Cuban leaving his country legally—Spain and Mexico. The other exit is by small boat, dodging Cuban patrols and making for nearby Florida.

In a small boat, the refugee takes what he can. But when he leaves with government approval, he takes only what he wears. The rest, including watches, jewelry and money, becomes Cuban government property.

Long Way Out

A Cuban begins the long, complicated process of obtaining a legal exit by applying to the government for permission to leave. Then the Neighborhood Defense Committee makes an inventory of all the applicant's property, and from that moment the property technically belongs to the government.

In perhaps a year, if there are no complications, the exit permit is granted. But that is only part of the wait. It may take six months to get a seat on Iberia Airlines' weekly flight to Madrid.

And before the prospective refugee gets to the airport, the government makes a recheck of his personal property as listed on its inventory to be sure nothing has been damaged or taken away.

Once the refugee reaches

Spain (even more, about 750 a month, go to Mexico) he looks for a job—in a nation with a high unemployment rate aggravated by the 15,000 Cubans who have already arrived.

More than half the Cubans look on Spain as a way station on a journey they hope will take them to the United States or back to Cuba—when conditions have changed.

But the dream of going home has faded. "We are convinced we cannot go back, but we live with it and don't talk about it because we don't want to hurt the cause by discouraging others," one refugee said.

"The Communists have infiltrated all; if nothing comes from outside, nothing will happen," another says of Cuba.

Hope to Reach U.S.

His hopes, like those of most of the jobless displaced persons in Spain, center on reaching the United States.

It takes a minimum of six

months to get a U.S. visa now and the waiting time is increasing as more refugees arrive.

The specially skilled and the wealthy have made an impact and settled in Spain. Cigar factories, a plastics business, a department store and a supermarket have been opened by Cubans, but many can do nothing but spend their days waiting for their U.S. visa.

Some have friends or relatives, and the others find temporary help from the Spanish government, the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee.

The IRC helps them find housing and gives them enough money to last a few days. The government provides two dining rooms which offer two well-prepared, free meals daily and can accommodate about 500 persons.

When the U.S. visa is approved, there is the additional problem of money for transportation. The IRC arranges a monthly charter flight to New York for \$110 a person, but even this fee is hard for many families to raise.

The refugees' crowding into Spain highlights the strangeness that bind Spain and her former colony together.

Strange Pair

Cuba, the lone Communist nation in the Western Hemisphere, and Spain, a traditional dictatorship, make a strange pair.

Spain and the United States are on good terms, fortified by strategic U.S. bases in Spain and U.S. military and economic aid which has totaled almost \$2 billion.

But, while the United States attempts to tighten a blockade around Cuba, Spanish trade with the island has grown and will top \$100 million this year.

Spain pays more than six cents a pound for Cuban sugar, well above the world price, while Spanish Communists in Cuba broadcast programs highly critical of the Franco regime.

Spain trades more with Cuba than any other Latin-American nation, while Cuba, which conceived its Communist revolution on the basis of opposing a traditional type of dictatorship, by unofficial figures trades more with Spain than any other western European country.