

Various Officials Working on Plans To Fit 140,000 Cubans Into U.S. Life

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United States officials are quietly preparing long-range plans to absorb the 140,000 Cubans expected to begin pouring into this country within the next few weeks.

At the moment, most official attention is riveted on the more immediate problem of transporting to the mainland those Cubans clamoring to take advantage of Premier Fidel Castro's relaxation of the exit bars.

Some 2000 are now waiting for the United States to complete charter arrangements for boats to take them across the Florida Strait. This sea shuttle is expected to begin within a few days, and the remainder subsequently will be brought out by an airlift.

But when the refugees arrive, they will be faced with the problems of finding jobs and homes, of learning a new language and new skills, of integrating themselves into American life.

The problem is expected to be most acute in the Miami area, which now contains about 85,000 Cubans—approximately one third of the exiles already in the United States.

But the pressure also will be felt to some degree in the 2000-odd other communities to which the remaining 135,000 exiles have scattered.

Since the U.S.-Cuban agreement on the new influx gives priority to those with relatives already in this country, most of these communities will experience some growth in their Cuban population.

This is the problem facing the Cuban Refugee Staff—a little-known branch of the Federal Welfare Administra-

tion. Since 1962, the Refugee Staff, from its offices in Washington and Miami, has had principal responsibility for coordinating the resettlement of Cuban refugees.

In facing the new influx, Refugee Staff officials point out that the problem is not as great as the projected figure of 140,000 arrivals would indicate. Since current plans call for transporting the refugees at the rate of about 4000 a month, arrival of the entire group will require about three years.

In most areas, the Refugee Staff concludes, absorption at this gradual rate will be relatively easy. The big problem remains Miami, where the new refugees are expected to settle at the rate of about 17,000 a year.

Since almost all have close relations within Miami's present Cuban community, the Government, for humanitarian reasons, cannot arbitrarily break up families by forcing them to go to other cities.

Persuasion Tried

Instead, the Government has decided on a program of publicity and persuasion designed to convince many of the new arrivals that their prospects would be better outside Miami. Cubans in Miami already are being told that the Government stands ready to assist individuals and whole families in finding work and homes elsewhere.

"Our past experience shows that the Cubans are sensible," a Refugee Staff official says. "If a man is an accountant and can get an accountant's job in Omaha while the only thing open in Miami is a spot pumping gas at a filling station, he'll usually go to Omaha."

Since most of the Cubans have a skill of some sort, Refugee Staff officials envision their main problem as one of matching the man to the job and then bringing the two together. However, they realize that there also will be those who need education and retraining. The Refugee Staff now is planning to shift most of this education and training work away from Miami.

The Refugee Staff also expects a substantial public welfare problem with the refugees. However, staff officials point out that only a small fraction of Cuban exiles already here are still on welfare rolls and say that the problem with the newcomers is expected to be a transitory one.

In all these programs, the Refugee Staff, which is essentially a coordinating group, works through existing agencies on the Federal, state municipal and private level. Welfare funds, for example, are channelled through city and county agencies, while the Office of Economic Opportunity is expected to play a big part in job retraining for the refugees.

The biggest job, resettlement, is actually done by four private agencies, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the Protestant Church World Service, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the non-sectarian International Rescue Committee.

To help finance all this work, the Refugee Staff has available, through its regular annual budget and a special new appropriation, \$42.6 million.