

# Free Cuba Radio Pierces The Sugar-Cane Curtain

By Lee Winfrey

Chicago Daily News Service

"The happy hour of the day," wrote a Cuban army captain in a letter, "is when I get home and take off my 'mask' and listen comfortably to Casariego."

Casariego is Isaac Casariego, a Cuban exile broadcasting every week to his homeland over an American radio station. Casariego is one of several exile announcers for Free Cuba Radio which buys time of three U.S. commercial radio stations.

Free Cuba Radio began broadcasting five years ago. It now programs 65 hours a week over stations WWL in New Orleans, WGBS in Miami and WKWF in Key West.

Live in the Spanish language, Free Cuba Radio broadcasts news, commentary and interviews designed to offset the propaganda barrage that Cubans receive from their own government-controlled radio and television stations. Private contributions support its work.

## Response Widespread

Response, according to the group's home office here, has come from many other places than Cuba. Free Cuba Radio has received letters from 43 countries and has filled requests for more than one million scripts and other special materials on Cuba, said Maria-da C. Arensberg, the executive secretary.

"The best part," she said, "is that these people (listeners in other countries) are literally overhearing what we are sending to Cuba. Our broadcasts are not designed for any other country."

Listeners have written in from as far away as Chile, Mrs. Arensberg said. The powerful broadcasts, some in short wave, blanket the Caribbean and carry especially well down the western coast of Latin America.

Although emphasis is heaviest on news, the programs also include taped interviews with Cuban refugees newly arrived in the United States,

and excerpts from letters from Cubans still living on the island.

Outgoing mail from Cubans is closely watched. Mrs. Arensberg said, a scrutiny that many Cubans elude by signing false names and addresses to their letters.

## Religious Message

Special programs include a religious message every Sunday from the Rev. Msgr. E. Boza Masvidal, former auxiliary bishop of Havana, who was thrown out of Cuba at gunpoint in 1961.

Another special is "The Home Program," directed to the mothers of Cuban families. The program attempts to keep alive the memory of how families live in a free society. After seven years of regimentation by a totalitarian government, it is feared that the memory of a nonregulated life might be slipping away.

With a staff of 17, Mrs. Arensberg cooks up the scripts in Washington. They are sent to the stations where they are read live by announcers like Casariego in New Orleans.

Mrs. Arensberg, an American, lived in Cuba for 15 years, leaving in 1960. "The staff is all Cuban, however," she told an interviewer, "including that girl who just brought you coffee. Her brother, her sister and her brother-in-law are all in jail in Cuba. Her brother-in-law is down to 80 pounds now and he has lost all his teeth."

Free Cuba Radio is supported by the Cuban Freedom Committee, a group of U.S. citizens formed in late 1960. The Committee is basically conservative, including former Rep. Donald C. Bruce (R-Ind.) and Peter O'Donnell of Dallas, Texas State chairman of the Goldwater-for-President Committee, but it also includes several liberal Democrats, including Sen. Clairborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Rep. Roman C. Pucinski (D-Ill.).