

Cuban Airlift to Miami Has 1,200,000 on List

Chicago Daily News Service
MIAMI — By April 1, more than 60,000 refugees had arrived in the United States via the 16-month-old Cuban refugee airlift.

No end to the U. S.-financed air ferry is in sight.

The twice-a-day, five-day-a-week freedom flights have been winging over the Florida Straits with nearly 4000 Cubans a month, since the lift began on Dec. 1, 1965.

1,200,000 More

Refugees in the United States have submitted the names of 1,200,000 relatives remaining in Cuba—more than one-seventh the island's population—that they want to join them in this country.

Allowing for some duplication of names, it's still enough to keep the airlift going at its present pace for more than 20 years provided all the Cubans wanted to leave and were permitted to do so.

Few believe, however, that the Cuban situation will remain static enough for the airlift to continue so long.

Of the present arrivals, two in three are whisked out of Miami almost immediately to join relatives scattered around the United States. About one in three remains here.

Florida Is Favorite

Others flee Cuba clandestinely in small boats, or depart legally through Mexico and Spain, then find their way to the United States and eventually Miami.

And there are the undetermined number who drift back

to Florida after resettlement, preferring the tropical climate and the more familiar surroundings.

Immigration's annual alien registration totals provide one of the few available yardsticks to measure the local exile population.

With an intense federally backed resettlement program and the cutoff of the U. S.-Cuban commercial flights during the October, 1962, missile crisis, Florida's Cuban colony was diminishing until the airlift began.

Shift by Castro

Alien registration for Jan. 31, 1963, listed 118,655 Cubans in the state. A year later there were 8000 fewer. And by Jan. 31, 1965, the total was reduced to 106,615, with 94,989 of them in the Miami area.

Then came Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's surprise policy switch of late 1965 when he said those Cubans who didn't like the way he was running the island could leave. It led to the airlift.

The Jan. 31, 1966, alien registration figures began to reflect Castro's semi-open door policy and the airlift.

There were 115,248 Cubans registered as aliens in Florida, including 102,858 in Greater Miami. They increased by 20,000 to 136,244 in the state by Jan. 31, 1967.

In the same 12-month period about 45,000 refugees were airlifted from Varadero, Cuba, to the United States. About two-thirds were relocated with 15,000 remaining in Miami.

The airlift has apparently had little effect on Miami's employment picture.

The Florida State Employment Service officials say February unemployment in Greater Miami was 15,600 or 3.2 per cent of the work force. That was down from 15,800 or 3.3 per cent of the work force unemployed in February, 1966.

The number of out-of-work Cubans in the total went up, however, from 2800 in February, 1966, to 3200 in February, 1967.

Of the airlift arrivals about 35 per cent are immediately potential members of the U. S. labor force. Sixty-five per cent are students, housewives and minor children.

Occupationally, 11.4 per cent of the new arrivals are listed as clerical and sales personnel; 7.2 per cent professional, semi-professional and managerial; 8 per cent skilled workers; 4 per cent semiskilled and unskilled; 3.3 per cent in the service trades, and 1.7 per cent fishermen and farmers.

About one-third are under 18 years old; 37.5 per cent from 18 to 45; 23.1 per cent from 46 to 64, and 7.1 per cent 65 and over.

The airlift is co-ordinated by the Swiss Embassy in Cuba, which prepares the master list of Cubans authorized to leave by the Cuban government and approved for admittance by the U. S. government.

The pool of names now cleared by both governments totals more than 50,000 and is constantly being enlarged as refugees are flown out.