

THE CUBAN AIRLIFT ENTERS 4TH YEAR

131,000 Refugees Flown to
Miami Since Late 1965

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MIAMI, Dec. 8—A day before the 18th American airliner this year was forced by a hijacker Tuesday to fly to Havana, an airplane from Cuba landed at Miami International Airport.

The arrival of the plane, with 86 refugees aboard, marked the third anniversary of the United States-sponsored Cuban airlift.

Since December, 1965—when, pursuant to an agreement between the United States and the Cuban Governments, the exodus of refugees interrupted by the missile crisis of October, 1962, was resumed—over 131,000 Cubans have arrived here on the airlift.

Twice daily, five times a week, an empty plane leaves Miami for Varadero Beach and returns with an average of 85 new refugees, mostly adults over 35 years of age and chil-

Half a Million Names

The airlift may go on indefinitely. The Cuban refugee center here has over half a million names of Cubans claimed as relatives and friends by exiles in the United States, and the number is constantly growing.

On the other hand, only some 200 exiles, mostly elderly persons, are said to have asked to be repatriated.

They are seeking to take advantage of a State Department proposal to Cuba, aimed chiefly at reducing the number of hijackings, to enable refugees wishing to return to their homeland to do so on the empty Cuba-bound airlift planes.

The Cuban Government, whose attitude toward the hijackings is described as ambivalent, has not replied to the proposal, which to become effective would entail an amendment to the airlift agreement of Nov. 6, 1965.

Selection Procedure

Under the agreement, which deals only with persons leaving Cuba, names of those whom the two Governments regard as eligible for the airlift, form the so-called Joint Consolidated Lists, from which Havana selects passengers for the Varadero-Miami flights.

Cuban males between 15 and 26 years of age, and sometimes technicians and specialists, are not permitted to leave.

When a Cuban applies for permission to abandon his country, an inventory of all his possessions, including household articles and savings accounts, is taken by the authorities.

He cannot sell or give away any of the inventoried items, most of which he is obliged to turn over to the state shortly before his departure. He is permitted to take with him only a few personal belongings, but no valuables.

Farm Work Required

More important, every able-bodied future refugee is sent to work in agriculture for a minimum of three months, and occasionally for almost a year.

Cubans refusing to work in what Premier Fidel Castro recently called with derision the "Johnson brigades" are eliminated from the airlift lists.

In the almost 10 years since Mr. Castro's Government has been in power, about 500,000 Cubans from all walks of life have left their country.

It is estimated that over 400,000 refugees live in the United States, of whom half reside in the greater Miami area.

About 80 per cent of the airlift refugees are resettled throughout the United States within 48 hours of their arrival in Miami, under the Cuban refugee program operated by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

A Routine Matter

For many Cubans, the inflow of new refugees is now a matter of routine.

It is not because they are not concerned over the airlift. But according to observers, over the last three years the exiles have been increasingly becoming United States-oriented.

The 200,000-refugee community here is described as being politically amorphous and leaderless. Economically, it is industrious and prosperous, while rapidly adopting the mores of American life.

With few refugees seriously expecting to return to their homeland in the near future, Cuba-oriented political activities are at the lowest ebb.

Most young Cubans, educated in American schools, do not consider themselves refugees. They speak English rather than Spanish and apparently show little interest in the developments in Cuba.

Their older relatives are mostly interested in making a living, and by and large they have made remarkable economic progress.