

Cuba Prospers With Freedom

(The author of the following article, associate editor of the Times-Review, weekly paper of the Diocese of La Crosse, Wis., recently completed a two-week fact-finding tour of Cuba.)

By PATRICK J. WHELAN
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

"The revolution has" reached here yet?" The man cutting hair in his open-air, palm-leaf-roofed barber shop—with water from the recent rain still dripping in spots—was joking about its conditions.

There was no pique in his voice, no annoyance in his attitude. For he belongs to one of the 300 families in the new Ignacio Agronomic Cooperative Farm—where the "revolution" has indeed arrived—not far from Florida City in Camaguey Province of Cuba.

"I'll soon be operating in that new shopping center" over there," he said, pointing. "Then the revolution will have reached me too."

"This cooperative has been in existence for only three months," said Lt. Fernando Miranda Santos, building contractor who gave up his career temporarily to help "build the new revolution."

"You would never recognize the place or the men, so great is the change since we started here," he said.

The Agronomic Cooperative is the former Aguilera rice plantation of a Batista henchman who fled with his boss when Fidel Castro's forces entered Havana last January 1.

It is one of six cooperative farms already in operation in the Province of Camaguey in central Cuba.

"Here we have over 15,000 acres of rice planted. The previous owner had only about 5,000 acres under cultivation," Lt. Miranda said.

As we covered the plantation in a jeep, he pointed out the areas where the workmen had been chopping down the thick growths of marabú trees to prepare the area for pasture.

"We're going to put some 18,000 acres into pasture. We'll start with about 2,000 head of cattle."

The new crushed-rock road—where no road existed before—made the going a little easier as our jeep rolled through the rain among the rice fields, the irrigation pumping stations, the areas cleared of the marabú trees.

Then I saw a row of newly built homes—bungalows of grey-painted wood siding, with windows and doors framed in white, a small yard area front and rear, roofed with palm leaves.

"The palm leaves are only temporary," Lt. Miranda said.

planning for a church, Mr. Tomen reported.

"We have already made arrangements with the bishop," he said. "The cooperative will furnish the land. The people here will build the church. A priest will come out here regularly to say Mass and give instructions," she said.

"Until we get out of the pilot city, Mass every Sunday in one of our houses here," she added.

Under the old regime this plantation of some 44,000 acres had only 300 families living on it. "Eventually we expect to settle about 800 families here," Lt. Tomen said.

"Will the people really acquire ownership like in the land," I asked, "or will it always be held by the government in the form of a cooperative?"

"We haven't reached that point here yet," Lt. Miranda explained. "All we're interested in right now are two things: To build decent housing for the farm families, and to increase and diversify production. The rest can wait."

But he explained that Article 26 of the Agrarian Reform Law definitely gives title to those who will receive land.

"Of course, the Agrarian Reform Institute will control and direct the cooperatives for a long time to come," he explained.

"The peons working the plantations now have no education whatever, and they know nothing about scientific farming, or about administration of their land," he said.

"We have to give them gradually at least a primary education—reading, writing and arithmetic. Our agronomists will instruct them in good farming practices and in farm management."

"As they become capable of managing their own affairs, they will take over the operation of their own cooperatives, and the government will bow out. Eventually they will be completely autonomous," Lt. Miranda said.

We also stopped at the old plantation store. The new shopping center will make it obsolete. Here the families and seasonal workers buy everything, food and clothing.

Lt. Miranda said that three such stores now operate on the plantation, with a total volume of over \$3,000 daily.

"Both the stores and the farming operation are already organized," he said, "for sharing profits at the end of the year."

The men know this through the regular meetings in which they study the functioning of a cooperative farm, he said.

"That's why they work with gusto, and they have such a friendly attitude," Lt. Miranda said. "They are becoming conscious of their importance as peons. They are no longer just a mass of burden or machines turning out units of work."

The people working with new spirit on the cooperative farms are not under the false impression that they will become prosperous overnight, Lt. Miranda explained.

Korea Convert Totals Soar To Record High

Seattle — (NC) — There are so many recent converts to Catholicism in Korea the Church is hard-pressed to care for them, Bishop Harold W. Henry, Vicar Apostolic of Kwangju, Korea, said on his arrival in Seattle from Korea.

"Since about 1948, the influx of Koreans into the Church has been really extraordinary," Bishop Henry said. "In 1947-48 alone, we had more converts in Korea than the Archdiocese of Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C., combined."

THE PRELATE attributed the great increase to two primary factors:

"The Korean people as a whole, are deeply religious."

Maltese Charge Trap Plot

Valletta — (RNS) — Lehen is Sowta' (Voice of Truth), official organ of Malta Catholic Action, accused former Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff of deliberately trying "to trap" Archbishop Michael Gonzi and drag him into the British colony's present political troubles.

The Catholic newspaper said Mr. Mintoff, leader of the Labor Party, has been distorting the prelate's public statements by quoting them out of context.

Brothers Launch Korea Farm Program

Hongou — (NC) — Three members of the only native Korean community of Brothers, the Brothers of the Blessed Korean Martyrs, have arrived here to start a model farm to improve the standard of living of the people in the area.

Eventually the Brothers hope that they will have the same influence on the population that the monasteries had in medieval Europe. Not only do they hope to improve the material welfare of the people—they also hope to bring the Catholic religion into their lives.

To start with, the Brothers will have two acres of land given to them by Bishop Harold Henry, Vicar Apostolic of Kwangju. It is hoped that in a few years the community will be self-supporting.

Hongou is situated on the south side of the Chaju Island and gets plenty of sun all the year round. The people are all farmers, planting very little rice as there is not enough water for irrigation. The main crop is barley which is the staple food of the people.

"An immediate source income for the Brothers is the sale of citrus fruit. On the land donated by Bishop Henry are 250 orange trees."

In time the Brothers plan to buy grazing land to raise cattle, sheep and pigs.

Surplus Items To Be Given

Washington — (RNS) — Rep. James Fulton (R-Pa.) introduced a bill in the House to expand the government's program of giving away property it no longer needs to include welfare or recreational agencies.

Look, Father, No Gas!

Scherville, Indiana — (RNS) — Youngsters at Hooster Boy's Town here find life full of adventures — and surprises. With the help of their host, the Rev. Michael A. Campagna of East Chicago, Ind., these boys closely examine the engine of an auto they purchased for their date nights. The boys were dismayed at first when the car wouldn't start, but discovered later that the only trouble was — an empty gas tank. Father Campagna first started Hooster Boy's Town, for three boys 12 years ago. Since then, more than 200 have laid claim to his affections and friendship.

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