

# What Church Faces In Castro's Cuba

## Nominal Catholics Play Into Red's Takeover

Havana — (RNS) — A moot question is how effectively the Roman Catholic Church in Cuba can face up to the challenge posed by the Communist-led government of Fidel Castro.

Catholic leaders questioned here have been at pains to warn against any automatic assumption that the Church possesses such prestige and power that Castro dare not come into open and violent conflict with it.

According to these leaders, the influence of the Catholic hierarchy is of unquestionable importance. That the strength of this influence is recognized by Castro has been evidenced by the vehemence with which he reacted to a recent pastoral letter in which the bishops warned against Communist encroachments in the country.

Two other factors underscoring the effectiveness of the Church, the Catholic leaders noted, have been the outstanding impact it has made in the field of education, and the remarkable work of Jesuit priests among laborers and craftsmen which provided the biggest bulwark against Communism which once dominated the unions during the former Batista dictatorship.

However, many of the Catholic leaders believe that the Church's most effective opposition to the creation of a new Red satellite in Cuba must come from without rather than from within. Specifically, they envision Catholic leadership abroad alerting free governments and people against the threat of a new slave state in which not only Catholicism but all religions would be bound to suffer.

Realistic observers — and there are many Catholic priests among them — agree that one of the facts that place the burden of anti-Castro opposition on outside Catholic forces is that Cuba is not the staunchly Catholic nation it is commonly supposed to be.

Nearly half the 6,000,000 people of the island profess no religion at all. Great numbers, including nominal Catholics, practice spiritism, a combination of animism and voodooism remaining from the times when slaves were imported from Africa for the sugar and tobacco plantations.

More discouraging still is the apparent predominance of Catholics who give merely nominal allegiance to the faith.

Havana is a case in point. In this city of nearly 1,000,000 residents, there are only six Catholic churches, and practicing Catholics are estimated to number less than two per cent of the population. Nor is Havana an exception. In Matanzas, there are only 2,000 active church members — both Protestants and Catholics — in a population of 100,000. Practising Catholics in Santa Clara and Guantanamo also number less than two per cent of the population.

The Church's greatest strength is in Camaguey. But even here only eight per cent of the 25,000 residents can be rated as devout Catholics.

In any showdown with the Castro regime, the Church would have to reckon also with the fact that the faithful are divided on the issue of the revolution. Many of the clashes that broke out over denunciations of Communism in the pulpits were between pre-Castro and anti-Castro members of the congregation.

In some of the interior provinces, the bishops' pastoral letter was not read not only because of fear of disturbance, but also because many laymen, and even priests, were known to be Castro sympathizers. Among the pre-Castro priests is Father Eligio Sardinias, captain of the revolutionary army, who is said to carry more weight with the people at times than the country's acting top churchman — Co-adjutor Archbishop Evelio Diaz y Cia of Havana.

Another factor that tends to weaken the Church's influence is the preponderance of non-Cubans among the clergy. All but 200 of the 720 priests on the island are either Spanish or Irish. There are reports in some quarters that the Castro government has enacted a law barring non-Cuban religious leaders or teachers. If such a law is enforced it would be a disastrous blow against the Church.

Also menacing the Church, which has considerable land holdings, is a new law that bars it from having tracts of more than 1,000 acres. Under this measure, the Castro regime seized a 1,200-acre farm in Camaguey that was used to support a Catholic school for the poor.

Yet another threat to the Church's prestige and influence in Cuba stems from what appears to be a deliberate attempt to eliminate

could not meet the higher salary requirements of a new law.

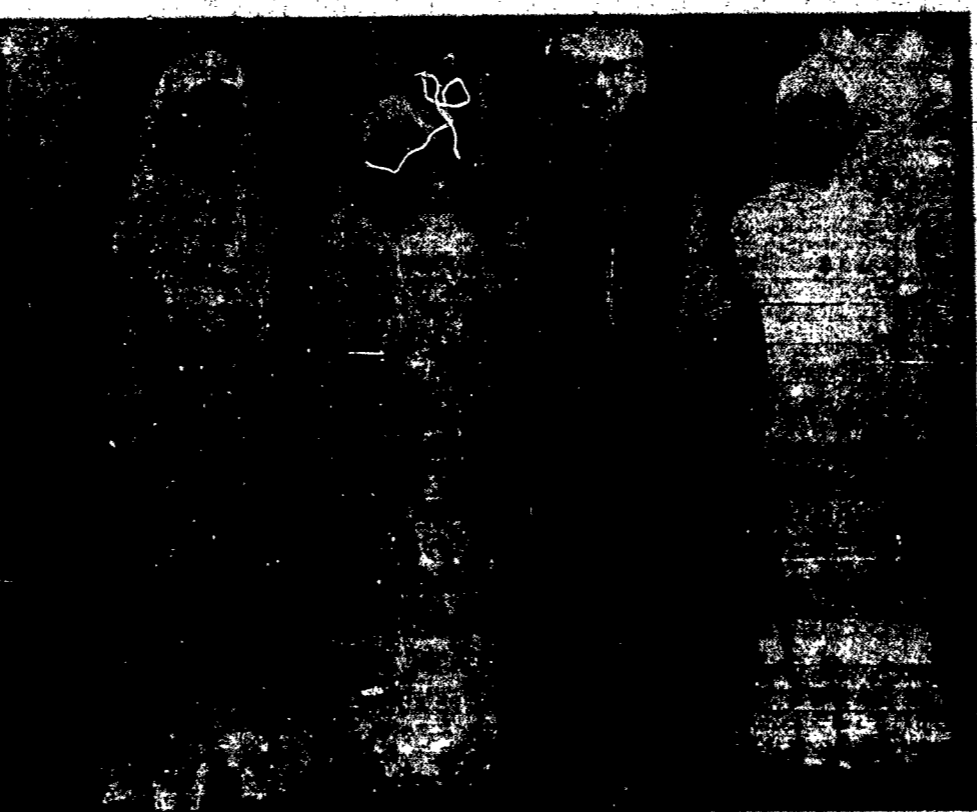
The government meanwhile has made it uneconomical to run other schools by withdrawing orphans, whose bills it paid, from boarding schools where the management has sought to dispense with the services of no longer needed teachers, cooks and housekeepers. At least 35 Catholic schools have been affected in this way.

Castro meanwhile continues to charge the Catholic Church with being reactionary and to brand priests who dare to

criticize his regime as "counter-revolutionaries." Government loudspeakers blast such messages as, "We don't need churches. Why are there churches? The real Christians are in the Sierra Maestras teaching."

The situation in general bodes ill for the future of the Church in Cuba. But the real will remains a bright hope that even if the Cuban Catholics must look to their co-religionists abroad for major support, the Church in Cuba itself will emerge from the present crisis purified and strengthened.

the private schools, many of them Catholic. Some 300 private schools failed to reopen in September because they



### New Sisters For Formosa

Maryknoll — (RNS) — Three Chinese girls, the first members of the newly-formed Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, pose with Bishop Frederick A. Donaghy of New Bedford, Mass., at investiture ceremonies at Maryknoll, N.Y. The new Chinese Sisterhood, the first founded in the Archdiocese of Taipei, was initiated by the prelate two years ago. The three are (from left): Sister Theresa Hwa, whose name means "Little Bell"; Sister Mary Yuen, "Ideal of Fidelity"; and Sister Agnes Pang, "Red Cherry Blossom." Bishop Donaghy, a former prisoner of the Chinese Reds, is presently serving as Regional Superior of all Maryknollers on Formosa.



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### Everybody Helps Him

Seoul — (RNS) — Thanks to the efforts of a Maryknoll priest and the United States Army, some 13,000 farmers and fishermen who earlier this year faced starvation on Paengyong Island, South Korea, may soon be self-supporting.

Paengyong and two smaller neighbors, Tschong and Sunchong, 46 miles out in the Yellow Sea, will soon have a hospital, improved agriculture and 28 new fishing boats.

Father Edward Moffett, the only Catholic priest on Paengyong, had appealed to foreign relief agencies in Korea to help the starving people and Catholic Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference, as well as an American Protestant organization, responded with relief goods.

Then the Army stepped in. Realizing that temporary relief was not the answer, Gen. Carter B. Magruder, Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command in Korea, got his staff to draw up plans to develop a productive, self-supporting community.

With \$47,000 from the U.S. Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK), the plans was put into operation.

### Growing Problem

# Cheating In Classrooms

Union City, — "Cheating by young people is merely part of the morality they have learned from the actions of their parents," the author asserts. "If scandals and the disk jockey and the most important teachers, the youth of America is infected with dishonesty, then it is merely reflecting the sad state into which the observation of the reveals and eighth commandments has sunk in the whole nation."

Father Greeley, a Chicago priest, student of modern conditions of suburban life and author of "The Church in the Suburbs," analyzes the conditions which have produced scandals involving youthful cheating or theft, in what The Sign says is "one of the most important articles" the magazine has ever published.

Among the scandals listed are the exposure of West Point football players' cheating on tests; the arrests of college basketball players for holding down the "point spread" in cooperation with gamblers, surveys demonstrating that between 60 and 80 per cent of college students think there is nothing wrong with cheating in tests, and the recent revelations of a flourish business in the sale of "ghost written" term papers and degree dissertations.

"YOUNG PEOPLE practice deception in advertising, betrayal of trusts by government officials, the TV quiz scandals and the disk jockey expose. Father Greeley points out that "through all the complicated and involved forms of cheating to be observed in our land, there seems to run two justifying themes—'Everyone is doing it' and 'It isn't hurting anyone.'"

### Pope Urges Bible Reading

Castel Gandolfo — (RNS) — Pope John XXIII, in a general audience at the papal summer residence here, urged people to read the Bible more.

Assailing dangerous trends in present-day literature, the 78-year-old Pontiff called for increased reading of the Bible and less of modern novels. The audience was attended by an estimated 12,000 persons. It was the final general audience given by the Pontiff before returning from Castel Gandolfo to the Vatican Palace.

"Many reasons can be found for this decline in public moral sense. Certainly, one explanation is the complex and impersonal nature of our society," the author states, describing the apparent difference between stealing from an individual and from a large corporation or government agency.

Probing deeper, Father Greeley finds "other and more important factors at work than the impersonality of our society. At the basis of the decline in public morality and public moral sense is a decline in the notion of fixed moral standards. A vast segment of our population today is convinced that whatever the majority thinks is right is therefore right."

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