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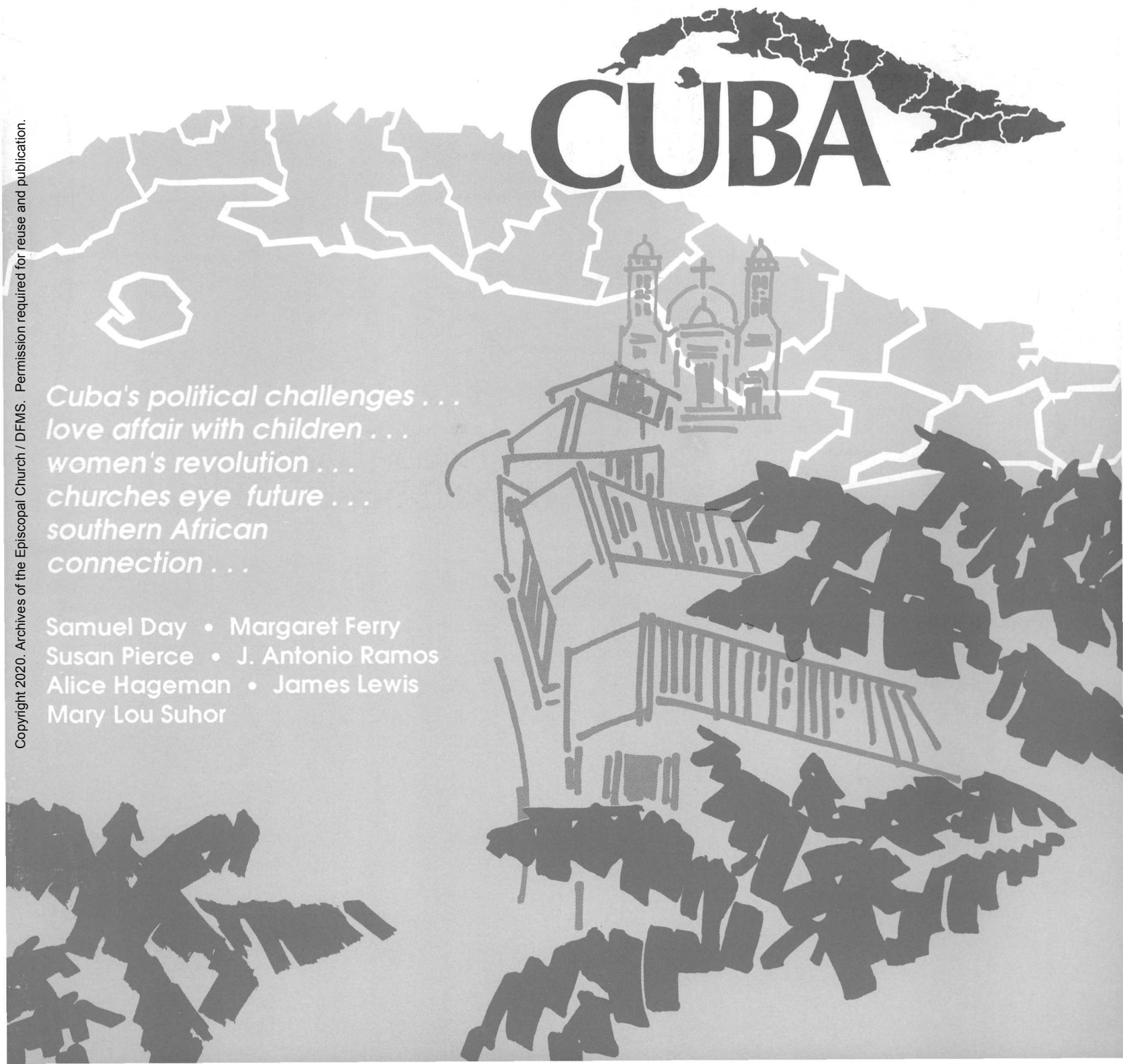
# THE WITNESS

# CUBA



*Cuba's political challenges . . .*
*love affair with children . . .*
*women's revolution . . .*
*churches eye future . . .*
*southern African*
*connection . . .*

Samuel Day • Margaret Ferry
Susan Pierce • J. Antonio Ramos
Alice Hageman • James Lewis
Mary Lou Suhor

# Letters

## U.S. policy co-alcoholic

Thanks to THE WITNESS for its incisive reporting on U.S. aggression in Central America. The United States has a co-alcoholic foreign policy. A co-alcoholic helps his relative or friend, the alcoholic, in such a way that the sickness worsens. The "co" gives money, food and support to the alcoholic. The sick person gets sicker.

Our U.S. "co" policy in Central and South America purports to help the people of those regions. Take Panama. We want to help the people throw off a dictator, establish a better economy and stop the drug traffic. To help our sick neighbor, we invade the country, kill thousands of people, and perpetuate widespread looting. We establish a government that suits us. We lend them money and supplies which they can't pay back. The sickness will worsen.

What assists an alcoholic is taking responsibility for one's self. What will help Central and South America is self-determination. The leadership and people of those countries can handle their own problems if we co-alcoholics will get out of the way.

I must be missing something in all this Panama stuff. If we were unhappy with Maggie Thatcher, could we go in and kidnap her and bring her to the United States for trial? Isn't there something in international law that suggests this to be a no-no?

**The Rev. Robert Warren Cromey**
**San Francisco, Cal.**

## For legalizing drugs

As former rector of Christ Church by the Sea, Colon, it is with considerable satisfaction that I endorse the article by the present rector, Edward O. Waldron, entitled "Drugs: Legalize the supply?" in the January WITNESS. I do not know the present situation in Panama, and I assume his article was written before the fall of Noriega, but I have long held that our national policy on drugs to date is unrealistic and ignores the lessons of our history, notably from 1918 to 1935.

I also know well that the entire history of West Indians and others who were imported to work, literally from birth to death, on the Panama Railroad, the French Canal and the American Canal under the brutal gold and silver system, which represented total discrimination — at least until 1948 and probably longer. A change did take place, during my years as rector of Christ Church, when the silver workers organized and for the first time received recognition of mainland labor. Even though the initial effort ran into difficulties under the United Public Workers, expelled from the CIO on grounds of communist leanings, the succeeding union was, I believe, effective in eliminating the gold and silver standard and accomplishing some much needed parity in salaries for non-U.S. citizens.

Nevertheless, at best the native workers as a whole have continued to suffer economic hardship, aggravated by governmental graft during the last 30 years, and if, as it appears, drug use spread widely through the populace, many of the causes do not lie far beneath the surface. I would like to read a more detailed appraisal by Waldron in support of his painful long-term solution, i.e., broad, national repentance. Certainly the United States has never measured up to its responsibilities and opportunities, and Panama, on the other hand, has been too prone to rely on Canal income instead of developing her own national resources, generally neglected over the years.

**The Rev. John Chisholm**
**Huntingdon Valley, Pa.**

## White House 'on hold'

After reading your January editorial, I called my representative and senator to ask that military aid to El Salvador be cut off and to protest the arrest of church workers there. Then I called the Embassy of El Salvador, which was curt, rude, and difficult to understand.

When I dialed the White House, I was told that political commentary had to be directed to another number. I called there and was put on hold. After a long wait, I hung up because I couldn't afford the mounting cost. Maybe that's the ploy. If the White House is counting, it certainly cuts down protest calls from those like myself on limited budgets. Shouldn't the White House have a 1-800 number to receive political comments from the people?

Would you please send me another copy of the January issue? I sent mine to Barbara Bush, along with materials on El Salvador which a Catholic nun had given me. I asked the nun if she knew about THE WITNESS and she said yes, she thought it was terrific and a number of her friends subscribe. I just wanted you to know you had readers in the Roman Catholic community here.

**Louise D. Smith**
**Holt, Mich.**

## Militarism rekindled

Your editorials are always right on and pertinent to current social problems. Racism is still with us, and militarism has been rekindled with the bloody and "successful" invasion of Panama. Washington keeps sending financial and military support to the butchers in El Salvador.

People everywhere in the country sympathize for the murdered Jesuits and associates down there. Protests ended in arrests for trespassing on federal property here and elsewhere. Over 20 of our people were arrested here in New Orleans, including visiting professor, Dan Berrigan.

I wish you grace and blessings.

**The Rev. Joseph H. Fichter, S.J.**
**New Orleans, La.**

## Likes keeping up to date

I was pleased to read Anita Cornwell's profile of Angela Davis in the January WITNESS, because I had not seen anything written about her for a long time. It was interesting to find out what Davis is doing now, and her vision for the future. She has always been one of the most consistently hard-working, aware and intelligent activists who came out of the 1960s.

As a Quaker with a longtime commitment to social action, I like reading THE WITNESS and being updated about the people who have provided leadership and inspiration in the movement for social change. It's important to keep up with them.

**Cathryn Coate**
**Philadelphia, Pa.**

## Letter gives pause

It seems to me that there are a few alarming points sounded by the pro-choice letter of Jeanne Bland et al in the January WITNESS. Their characterization of the anti-abortion perspective seems ordinary and misleading.

Offering myself and knowing others, secular and religious, I must insist that anti-abortion protestors need not be Roman Catholic or Protestant fundamentalist, and that their aim is not necessarily to proscribe contraception and sex education. Some advocate these things.

The authors of the letter unacceptably suggest that the actions of anti-abortion protestors are appropriate only to a scene from a Fellini movie. Indeed, Christianity stands to suffer greatly if, within anyone's community, even Christians genuinely ridicule or impugn the display of crucifixes, priests, kneeling and praying.

According to Bland et al, some anti-abortion people support capital punishment and our country's lethal aid to El Salvador (even though some anti-abortion protesters also execrate capital punishment and our country's lethal aid to El Salvador). The pro-choice claim here is that it is contradictory to be against abortion and for capital punishment or lethal foreign aid. This claim, however, is a serious complication not for the anti-abortion advocate but for the pro-choice one. The complication is this: There is a contradiction only if abortion and capital punishment, or lethal foreign aid, each involves the loss of human life. The pro-choice criticism here entails that abortion involves the loss of human life.

According to Bland et al, it is most important to uphold the separation of church and state. If this recommendation is right, then Christians must be politically still and silent. And stillness and silence are deadly.

**John D. Munday**
**Rockledge, Pa.**

## Not mainstream enough

I do not wish to renew THE WITNESS for the coming year, either my own subscription or my gift subscriptions. I feel the magazine does not represent the mainstream of Episcopalian thought. The articles are too one-sided with basically the same opinions in all of the issues. I do not feel that I would be a good steward of the monies entrusted to me if I continued.

**Mrs. Geri Stirling, Director**
**Church Peridical Club**
**Diocese of Arizona**

## Picks up tab

Last spring you wrote and offered me a year's subscription when I'd finished my degree, as you do for seminarians. Well, I'm happy to say I received the MFA in creative writing recently for a collection of 38 poems, plus those term papers of course. But I'd like to kick in one year's worth because surely your generosity will find good use for the revenue. I enjoy THE WITNESS each month.

I joined the Anglican Church in 1974 in Montreal and will always be grateful. I learned that the church is not an option or a denomination, but a nation transcending political boundaries, within which each citizen possesses integrity and has the right not to be ignored, or worse, crushed. Like Our Lord, people who try to put such a belief into practice are unpopular.

**Vivian Lewin**
**Gainesville, Fla.**

## Getting on with it

In view of the message of the whole article ("AIDS and the survival of the fittest" by John Snow, December) it's probably "picky" to note Carnegie's name on page 8 leading the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers as laissez faire capitalists. In one respect he differed. As I remember from reading Annie Dillard, Carnegie did as he had planned and distributed his wealth at his death (all those Carnegie Libraries) leaving only a million or so for his family — not enough to be a self-perpetuating "empire."

I like the idea that it's "the fear" of death that makes us give in (and give up). But some things seem to be falling in place — a possible program for training and retooling for a peace time economy, Tom Wicker correcting our view of nuclear waste (it cannot be "solved" and done with; it's with us for thousands of years). Might as well get on with it.

**Eleanor Miles**
**Madison, Wisc.**

## Missing the mag

Please send me THE WITNESS as soon as possible. I've had nothing to read since I stopped subscribing. What is happening in South and Central America? In Africa? What about health care, the ageing, the homeless, etc.?

**Janet Dickerson**
**DesPeres, Mo.**

THE WITNESS

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# THE WITNESS

# Table of Contents



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# Editorial

## Welcome home, Nelson Mandela

*I am the first accused. At the outset, I want to say that the suggestion made by the state in its opening that the struggle in South Africa is under the influence of foreigners or Communists is wholly incorrect. I had done whatever I did both as an individual and as a leader of my people, because of my experience in South Africa and my own proudly felt African background, and not because of what any outsider might have said . . .*

*I have been influenced by Marxist thought, but this is also true of many of the leaders of the new independent states. Such widely different persons as Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Nasser all acknowledged this fact. We all accept the need for some form of socialism to enable our people to catch up with the advanced countries of this world to overcome their legacy of extreme poverty . . .*

*During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.*

**— Nelson Mandela in his 1964 defense speech, reprinted in THE WITNESS, 2/87**

After 27 and 1/2 years — almost a generation in time — Nelson Mandela is free. We prayerfully rejoice, along with his wife, Winnie, and the rest of the world united around the struggle against apartheid in South Africa — at the same time suppressing outrage that this African National Congress leader had to spend some 10,000 days of his life behind bars.

Mandela's first speech after his release reflected that he still affirms violence as a defensive, last resort to achieve liberation. In that respect, it is fitting that the release of Mandela coincided with this issue of THE WITNESS about Cuba, a country which has fought at great cost against racism and colonialism in southern Africa. Cuba recently buried more than 2,200 men and women who had died in military and civilian service in Africa, in a campaign which allowed Angola and Namibia to successfully defend themselves against South Africa in their struggles for sovereignty. It was the defeat of the invading South African forces in Cuito Cuanavale, Tchipa and Calueque, which forced South African authorities to sit at the table with Angola in negotiations mediated by the United States. Another consequence of Cuban military presence was the creation of conditions for Namibian independence.

Interestingly, Cuba has named as head of its Anti-Apartheid Committee the Rev. Adolfo Ham, a Presbyterian pastor. This is the first time in recent history that a church person has been asked to lead a government effort there.

But in these months of explosive social change, even in South Africa, we seek in vain for *perestroika* in the United States. As peace activist Dan Berrigan put it, "governments vanish like Punch and Judy puppets, and prisoners become heads of state" abroad, but "we Americans are stuck. This country is like a mortuary convention led by the stalking dead. Except these convening corpses are potent indeed; they mock the living, lie and smile and kill by proxy . . . We see horrific images of the dead of Romania, nothing of the dead of Panama. Evidently to paraphrase Orwell, some corpses are more equal than others."

Therefore, this Lent we rejoice for Nelson Mandela and the hope his release offers for ANC efforts to create a new South Africa. Toward that end, we will intensify our support to maintain economic sanctions. But equally, we will continue to work and pray for change and justice in our own hemisphere. TW

# Cuba studies role in an

December 7th. That date has special meaning not only in the United States but also in Cuba, where it marks the day one of its noted revolutionaries, Antonio Maceo, was killed in the struggle for Cuban independence in 1896. Because of its significance, Cubans chose Dec. 7th last year to lay to rest the remains of their men and women who died in furtherance of other independence struggles — mainly in Africa, the land of Maceo's ancestors. The special memorial ceremony took place at El Cacahual mausoleum, near Havana, where Maceo's remains are interred.

More than 2,000 Cuban "internationalist fighters" have died protecting the regime that emerged 15 years ago from Portuguese colonial rule in Angola. On a per capita basis, that's higher than the U.S. death toll in Vietnam.

Now, with Angolan independence apparently made secure by negotiated withdrawal of South African forces, Cuban soldiers were returning home as heroes — and President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola had come to help Fidel Castro honor the dead.

The rumble of slow-moving artillery caissons bearing flag-draped coffins underlined the solemnity of this farewell salute. The words and tone of the Cuban leader imparted an additional note of somberness.

On this December 7th Cuba said goodbye not just to its sons and daughters who died in the cause of international socialism on distant shores. It also bade a public farewell to old friends from across the waters who had helped protect socialism at home.

His beard turning grey but his voice still strong and defiant, Fidel Castro, now 63, told the hushed crowd that Cuba will go it alone if necessary rather than follow the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in dismantling communism.

He stressed that socialism cannot be saved by resorting to the tools of capitalism; and the cause of socialism cannot be advanced by joining capitalism in plundering the Third World.

Castro said, "We have never aspired to having custody of the banners and principles which the revolutionary movement has defended throughout its heroic and inspiring history. However, if fate were to decree that, one day, we would be among the last defenders of socialism in a world in which U.S. imperialism had realized Hitler's dream of world domination, we would defend this bulwark to the last drop of our blood."

Cuba welcomes the Cold War thaw, with its prospect for nuclear disarmament, Castro said, but it sees the growing U.S.-Soviet political accord as potentially dangerous to the Third World.

"They speak of peace," he said, "but what kind of peace? Of peace between the major powers, while imperialism reserves the right to intervene in and attack the Third World countries."

He cited several examples of growing U.S. intervention in the affairs of underdeveloped nations, unaware that within two weeks the invasion of Panama would provide him with another.

"The imperialist government of the United States demands that no one help the Salvadoran revolutionaries and tries to blackmail the USSR into ending its economic and military assistance to Nicaragua and Cuba because we express solidarity with the Salvadoran revolutionaries, even though we abide strictly

**Samuel H. Day, Jr.** is co-director of Nukewatch in Madison, Wisc. and a member of THE WITNESS Editorial Board. He recently spent six months in jail for non-violent civil disobedience at a missile silo site. While in jail, he edited a book entitled *Prisoners on Purpose*.

# abandoned Third World

by Sam Day

by our commitments concerning the weapons supplied by the USSR . . . Meanwhile, that same imperialist government which is demanding an end to solidarity with Salvadoran revolutionaries is helping the genocidal Salvadoran government and sending special combat units to El Salvador; supporting the counterrevolution in Nicaragua; organizing coups d'état and the assassinations of leaders in Panama; sending military aid to UNITA in Angola — in spite of the successful peace agreements in southwestern Africa — and continuing to supply the rebel forces in Afghanistan with large amounts of weapons, ignoring the Geneva Accords and the fact that Soviet troops have withdrawn," said Castro.

For a WITNESS writers' group touring Cuba in early December, the defiance of Castro — who led Cuba out of the U.S. political and economic orbit in 1959 — dispelled any questions of whether Cuba will trim its sails to meet the new winds blowing from the Communist world.

The answer, reiterated in interviews with lesser government and party officials, is an emphatic "No." Unlike their allies in the Soviet bloc, the people who have ruled Cuba for 31 years have no intention of relinquishing one-party control, ordering Western-style political elections, cutting back their system of centralized social planning, or returning to a market economy.

They freely acknowledged that there is popular discontent in this island nation of 10 million, particularly among young people. But Cuba is in no danger of going the way of Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia or Romania, they assured us, because socialism has deeper roots here. The revolution was achieved by the Cubans themselves (rather than being imported by the Red Army) and it continues to enjoy a far greater degree of popular participation.

"Popular participation is the key to our revolution," we were told by Fernando Garcia-Bielsa, a Communist Party Central Committee official whose job is to help keep the party leadership abreast of hemispheric developments.

"Here we made our own revolution. But it wasn't just an historical happening 30 years ago. It has been happening every year," said Garcia-Bielsa.

He and others acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining enthusiasm for the revolution in the face of continuing scarcity and rising expectations — particularly among young people, who don't remember the old days.

Though a poor nation not overly-endowed with natural resources, Cuba has made giant social strides since 1959 — bringing health care, education and housing within reach of all, eliminating great disparities between rich and poor. But these achievements have come at the cost of market place austerities.

No Cuban goes to bed hungry or homeless, we were told, but the food is plain and the apartments are apt to be cramped with relatives and in-laws waiting for a home of their own. Such consumer shortages, partly the result of policies that deliberately favor underlying social programs, are compounded by bureaucratic inefficiencies — freely admitted by the government — and U.S. economic strategies designed to deny the Castro government badly-needed hard currencies.

At the heart of the U.S. economic offensive is a trade embargo which, by sealing off the nearby U.S. market, has stunted and distorted the Cuban economy, making it heavily dependent on the socialist trading bloc half a world away. In addition, U.S. policy has aimed, often successfully, at denying Cuba access to

other trading partners and international lending sources.

The United States makes no bones about the purpose of its economic and ideological warfare against socialist Cuba. The purpose is to isolate that country economically and politically, to hamstring its development, and thereby to deter others in Latin America and the Caribbean from following the Cuban example.

Can Cuba survive the continuing U.S. "cold war" in the face of changing circumstances in the Eastern bloc which could terminate the ideologically-based grants and trade subsidies that Cuba has enjoyed since the revolution?

That question was put to Ramon Sanchez-Parodi, Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister for American affairs. He said yes.

"The embargo has been going on for 30 years. We're almost used to it." He said what concerned him more was the adverse impact on Third World nations from current changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He said he already saw signs of international capital abandoning Third World projects in order to pursue new investment opportunities in Eastern Europe.

As for its dealing with the United States, Cuba would like to normalize relations, Sanchez-Parodi said, but not on the basis of the past, when the United States treated the island like an economic colony. From Cuba's standpoint there are no serious issues between the two governments, and it would welcome cooperation in such common problems as combatting the illegal drug trade.

Periodic peace feelers from Havana or Washington always have foundered on the rock of U.S. ideological hostility, Sanchez-Parodi said. From time to time over the years U.S. domestic opinion has exerted a restraining influence on U.S. policy toward such places as Vietnam, southern Africa and Central America, Sanchez-Parodi observed. But Cuba has

**Ramon Sanchez-Parodi**

remained the victim of bipartisan U.S. foreign policy consensus which seems to regard the Cuban revolution as a threat.

What the Deputy Foreign Minister said was doubly true. The U.S. government has succeeded in isolating Cuba not just from much of the world economy but from the U.S. peace and justice movement as well.

Why do American political activists, properly sensitized to their government's interference in Nicaragua and El Salvador, evince little awareness or concern about bludgeoning of Cuba? Several explanations come to mind:

1. The embargo has worked all too well. It has curtailed U.S. travel in Cuba, restricted cultural contacts between the two countries, and cut off the information we need in order to make a fair judgment of the Cuban revolution.

2. The information vacuum has been filled by a government disinformation program aimed at falsely portraying Cuba as a threat to vital U.S. interests and other nations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. A large and influential Cuban exile community in the United States has aided and abetted our government's campaign of lies and distortions about the Cuban revolution.

4. Except for the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, the U.S. campaign against Cuba has been a bloodless one. Unlike the wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, there have been no atrocities to grab headlines and stimulate public protest.

5. Churches do not provide the same link. Much of the U.S. domestic support for revolutionary movements in Central America comes from the identification of religious people with that struggle. In the revolution, which preceded the advent of liberation theology, the Cuban churches identified with the forces of reaction.

6. Communist Cuba, like any government under virtual siege by a powerful nearby foe, has repressive features such as occasional summary trials and executions, political prisoners, sanctions regarding religion, a controlled press, and an excessively regimented economy. This has understandably alienated many Americans, including some on the left.

Despite the difficulties standing in the way of a fully-informed public opinion, U.S. policy toward Cuba ought not to remain unchallenged. At stake is the simple question of justice for a neighboring country that has done us no harm. But the issue goes deeper than that.

The effort to isolate and cripple the independent government of Cuba is part of a larger policy of projecting American power and influence elsewhere in the world to the detriment of other countries and also to Americans, who ultimately wind up bearing the burdens of empire. We can best challenge that policy by examining all its parts. The U.S. war on Cuba is a significant part of that policy.

Now that the tensions and the hysteria of the East-West cold war are subsiding at long last, it would be a shameful irony if those forces were rechanneled into a North-South war against bogus enemies in the Third World.

For many years the cold warriors in our midst have been preparing for that eventuality through the villainization of poor Third World countries that dared to deviate from our control. Cuba is the place where that process began. It's a good place to bring it to a halt. TW

# Doing theology in a Marxist ambience

by Alice L. Hageman

As rapid changes come to Eastern European countries, churches have been working within socialist frameworks to help reshape the emerging political and social order. Although socialist countries are usually stereotyped as totally anti-religion, Christian-Marxist dialogue has been going on quietly in these countries for many years. But this dialogue has also shaped a new theology in the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Last winter, for example, a group of 100 academics, activists, and clergy gathered at a Cuban seminary in Matanzas for the Third International *Encuentro* (Encounter) of Theology, sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean region of the Christian Peace Conference. Most participants came from outside Cuba, although Cubans constituted the largest single delegation, including several participant observers from the Department of Religious Studies of the Cuban Academy of Sciences. There were also six European and six U.S. participants.

The Christian Peace Conference originated in the Eastern Europe of the late 1950s, under the tutelage of noted Czech theologian Josef Hromadka. Since its inception CPC's international headquarters has been located in Prague. Its first assembly took place in 1961, when both Chinese and Russian delegates were prominent; by 1964, the Chinese were no longer attending. For many years the CPC served as the Eastern European quasi-counterpart to the World Council of Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church provided primary CPC financial support, as the churches in the United States and Western Europe did for the WCC. In those days theological discourse in the CPC, as in the WCC, was shaped chiefly by "east-west" rather than "north-south" issues.

Early CPC deliberations were dominated by "the German question," and although persons from the Southern Hemisphere were present from the beginning at CPC assemblies, Third World issues were secondary to the conversations between Christians east and west. Of particular interest in early CPC gatherings were the contrasting assessments of Marxism made by those whose daily lives were shaped by institutions modeled after the thoughts of Marx and Lenin, versus those who had difficulty imagining any option other than exile open to a Christian living in a Marxist society. Since the early 1960s, participants in CPC gatherings were no strangers to Christian-Marxist dialogue.

It was not until the 1970s that CPC regional groups began to develop in the Southern Hemisphere. It is appropriate that all three of the theological *encuentros* sponsored by the Latin American-Caribbean group have taken place in Matanzas, since Cuba is the first country in the Western Hemisphere where Christian-Marxist encounters have taken place on an informal and daily basis, and where Christians and Marxists alike have tried to sort out some of the tensions between traditional and contemporary understandings on the part of both church and government.

The first of these international meetings of theologians took place in 1979, on the theme, "Evangelization and Politics." The second meeting, or *encuentro*, was held in November 1983, with participants gathering at the same time that the bodies of Cuban construction workers and others killed in the U.S. invasion of Grenada were being returned home. Just as the second gathering took place under the cloud of Grenada, so also was this third *encuentro* dominated by political events — this time in El Salvador and in anticipation of U.S. action in Panama. And the Eastern Europeans present — a Czech and an East German — were overtaken by events occurring in their homelands in the brief time they had been traveling, as news came daily of far-reaching and seemingly irreversible changes. November 1989, like November 1983, was an historic moment to be present at such a gathering.

The theme was "Evangelization and Colonization: Past, Present and Future of Latin America and the Caribbean." The keynote biblical text was taken from *Micah 5:2a*, "Yaweh will abandon them only until such time as that which is to be born will be born." (Latin American version.) This *encuentro* was also notable as one of the first gatherings in which a Christian organization evaluated the heritage of 1492, when Christopher Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere, in anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the event in 1992.

Luis Rivera Pagan, a professor at the

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**Alice L. Hageman**, a Presbyterian minister and attorney, has been inquiring into religion in Cuba since 1969. Co-author of *Religion in Cuba Today*, she recently made her 11th trip to the island. She currently investigates allegations of lawyer misconduct for the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers.

University of Puerto Rico, gave the keynote speech, a systematic evaluation of European presence in the Southern portion of the Western Hemisphere over the past 500 years. Exploring potential postures towards 1992 — celebration, commemoration, or acknowledgement of conquest — he identified the impact of the Columbus voyages as conquest, resulting in ethnic genocide of native peoples.

Rivera especially emphasized the negative impact of the conquest on indigenous women. Describing the near-ideal (and possibly idealized) role of women in pre-Columbian culture, he asserted that the encounter of the two worlds meant that woman went from a situation in which she was a natural partner with man in a setting where both had a relationship with nature, to one in a patriarchal, nature-denying society where she was required to submit to man and was confined to a private world in which her identity and value was derived solely through her body.

Once raped, she was marked by the aggressor; whether mistress, concubine or wife, she was placed at the disposal of the erotic needs of the *conquistadores*, producing the children who assured the continuity of society. Women, argued Rivera, were the true representatives of cultural resistance — they sought ways to preserve their own society while learning the culture of the new society.

Hector Diaz Palanco, from the Dominican Republic, further explored the theme of ethnic genocide resulting from the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. Diaz asserted that the anti-ethnic bias of Christianity as the "one true faith" played a significant role in eradicating the historic roots of various ethnic groups.

Jorge Pixley, a North American who has lived most of his life in Latin America and currently teaches at a Baptist seminary in Nicaragua, provoked the most lively discussion during the *encuentro*. During a Bible study on the Gospel of Luke, Pixley asserted that Luke *lied*, describing in his Gospel a false, temple-based view of the early church. Luke's perspective, according to Pixley, represented an effort to legitimize Peter's role and the importance of the apostles' stay in Jerusalem, while de-emphasizing the popular church and the importance of radical anti-ecclesiastical actions such as the cleansing of the Temple. Pixley posited that those who stayed tranquilly rooted in the Temple in Jerusalem were accomplices in the persecution of early Christians. The discussion, though spirited, was geared especially to those well-versed in contemporary New Testament studies.

Maria Vasconcelos Rezende, a Brazilian, was the only woman to make a major presentation. She was the third speaker on the second morning's program. The two men who preceded her took more than their allotted time. She did not protest, but rather told them to take all the time they wanted; instead of 30 to 40 minutes, she was left with less than 15. In her brief remarks she emphasized that, as Rivera had pointed out, 1992 is an opportunity to celebrate the role of women in *resistance*. However, she pointed out that this is also a time to recognize that *persistence* in women's domestic work had made daily life tolerable, not only in the kitchen and home, but also in contributing to the domestic and nurturing aspect of various workplaces.

Vasconcelos later explained that her refusal to protest the diminution of her allotted time had been a form of protest against the patriarchal organization of the *encuentro*. Most of the time was spent in plenary session as speakers (most of whom were male) made formal presentations. The lunch break was only an hour long. There was little opportunity for informal interchange or gatherings in which the spirit might blow loose among this unique gathering. Lodging logistics further contributed to a lack of cohesion and the difficulty of informal interchange. Cuban delegates were housed at the seminary, while other participants were bused back and forth from a hotel 45 minutes away in the beach resort of Varadero, thus segregating *encuentro* participants from 6 p.m. until 9 a.m. each day.

To some extent Vasconcelos' observation about the organization of this event

## Pope invited to Cuba

**Pope John Paul II may go to Cuba next year. Jose Felipe Carneado, head of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Communist Party of Cuba, visited the Vatican in May and delivered a message from Fidel Castro, encouraging the Pope to accept an invitation extended by Cuba's Roman Catholic Bishops.**

**Commenting on his meeting with the Pope, Dr. Carneado said, "This visit, for which the Cuban government feels conditions exist . . . will reaffirm the new relationship, and that differences which existed in the past have been overcome. It will be an extraordinary contribution for both the Catholic Church and the Cuban people, as well as for our government, which is interested in unity between believers and nonbelievers," he added.**

**Several Latin Americans present at the Christian Peace Conference questioned Cubans in informal conversation about why Fidel Castro had invited the Pope. The critics said they thought John Paul II was very conservative in his positions; in light of his activities during his visit to Nicaragua, they warned that he was a potentially damaging guest to receive. The Cubans pointed out, however, that the invitation had come from the Cuban bishops, not from Castro, and although a calculated risk they felt Cuba had more to gain than lose in the visit.**

**The Pope's visit is tentatively scheduled for 1991; the exact date depends on his travel schedule.**

reflected a tension inherent in the *encuentro*. Many participants were academics and church administrators who, although acquainted with grass-roots activities and fluent in the "option-for-the-poor" language of liberation theology, nevertheless are accustomed to formal presentations and structured deliberations in conference settings. Those participants who were more activist than academic, although no strangers to disciplined reflection, find more informal settings and less structured schedules more conducive to productive interchange.

For example, a young priest from Brazil displayed photos of his friends and colleagues who had been murdered recently, and in a persistent and quiet way sought opportunities to share his story informally with others. He told of the courageous few who are taking on big landowners and their hired vigilantes to assert the claims of the landless to the land they work and occupy. The specifics of his story made the theory and rhetoric of the conference come alive, and his photos gave human faces to those who are all too often forfeiting their lives in the many struggles throughout Latin America for land, bread, and dignity.

In addition to consideration of issues related to 1992, there were three other recurring themes. One was the impact of the external debt, a continuing preoccupation throughout Latin America. Perhaps less widely known, and one more of the connections made in this setting, is that several countries in Eastern Europe, including Rumania, Poland, and Hungary, are also struggling with a major debt burden. Lubomir Mirejowski, General Secretary of the CPC International, pointed out that the temptation to seek loans from foreign banks to finance everything from major development projects to consumer goods is one of the greatest threats to Eastern European countries in the coming years.

A second, and more hopeful, theme was an emphasis on and affirmation of our interconnectedness and our vision of being one people facing common threats and sharing common dreams. Many speakers were optimistic that, despite the decline of emphasis on collaborative work since the '60s, and the dominance of individualism in the '80s, new winds might be stirring in the '90s. This *encuentro* gave a taste of the rich fare resulting when persons met one another and shared their preoccupations in such a global perspective.

The issue of collaboration between Christians and Marxists was the third theme. Although Fernando Martinez, of the Cuban Communist Party's Center for the Study of the Americas, presented a political analysis of contemporary Latin America, Christian-Marxist collaboration was addressed more implicitly than explicitly. That may be symbolic of where the issue now finds itself, as the attendant anxiety of previous decades has subsided, and relations have progressed to the point where both collaboration *and* distinctiveness are assumed. As Sergio Mendez Arceo, former Roman Catholic bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico, pointed out in his closing remarks, although there are no contradictions between Christianity and Marxism, neither is there an identity. Yet, he concluded, there *is* mutual understanding — and that does represent an explosive possibility. TW

## Facts about Cuba

Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies and lies on the northern boundary of the Caribbean Sea, about 90 miles south of Key West, Fla. Measuring approximately 745 miles from west to east, its width ranges from 22 miles to 125 miles. In land area, Cuba is about the size of Pennsylvania. Its harbors — Havana, Santiago, Guantanamo, Bahia Honda, etc. are among the best in the world.

**Population:** Approximately 10.4 million. Some 73% live in urban areas, 27% in rural areas. Ethnic breakdown is 66% Caucasian, 12% Black, 22% "Mixed."

**Workforce:** About 62% male and 39% female. Unemployment rate is 3.4%. Average monthly salary is 190 to 210 pesos (1 peso = US$1.25). Rent, by law, is no more than 10% of a worker's income. Health care and education are free. A liter of rationed milk costs .25 pesos. A kilo (2.2 lbs.) of rationed chicken costs 1.54 pesos.

**Literacy:** 98%; enrollment among primary school-age children is 100%.

**Life expectancy:** 74 years, men; 76 years, women. Infant morality rate 11 per 1000.

# Cuba's love affair with children

by Margaret E. Ferry

The American citizen lucky enough to meet the strict U.S. government guidelines for a legal visit to Cuba receives a little red brochure at the Miami airport. It does nothing to relieve any twinges of anxiety the traveler may have regarding this country Americans know so little about, and around which the U.S. government has erected an invisible wall.

The little red pamphlet explicates the regulations issued under the Trading with the Enemy Act as they apply to Cuba. As these regulations do not apply to either of the well-known communist countries, the Soviet Union and China, the American traveler cannot help wondering how evil Cuba may be. The pamphlet does not explain. It simply states that the United States issued these regulations in 1963 "in response to certain hostile acts (unspecified) by the Cuban government" and that "the basic goal of the sanctions against Cuba is to isolate Cuba economically and deprive it of U.S. dollars." Violations of the regulations can be punished by prison terms of up to 12 years and fines for individuals as high as $250,000.

One explanation for Cuba's status as enemy may be found in the 1961 disaster known as the Bay of Pigs. That was when the U.S. government, presumably on behalf of some of its 180 million citizens, was unsuccessful in invading Cuba, a country of less than 9 million at that time.

So what did I go to see in Cuba on my first trip in 1986? My professional interests were in the fields of health and education, and I had heard and read stories of great Cuban successes in these two areas. I wanted to see for myself. I came home depressed and shamed by the contrast in priorities set by my country and a poor little nation 90 miles from Florida. In both health care and education Cuba demonstrated its concern for children in proactive programs for prevention and early intervention. Planning emphasized an inclusive attitude for the common good. The United States, however, has been more reactive. Prevention has had less emphasis than has crisis intervention and rehabilitation. Individual rights and privileges seem more important than the common good.

I decided I wanted to go back to Cuba to be sure my observations were valid, and that what I had seen was not a fluke of time, places, or personalities. And I wanted to see more of the churches in a country where the government seemed to act in accordance with what we consider "Christian values" but restricted church activities. I was fortunate enough to become a member of THE WITNESS news-gathering group.

Again I was charmed by the warm and friendly Cubans and their handsome children, and impressed by how a poor country took care of its children, the least powerful of any group in society. A visitor might assume that *Matthew 25* had been their inspiration. Pre-revolution children in the countryside could look forward to a short life of poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy. An early priority of Fidel Castro was the provision of potable water throughout the island. This public health measure meant an immediate improvement in the health of the children as waterborne diseases were practically eliminated.

Food, to be sure, is rationed, but each person is guaranteed a monthly basic diet which meets or exceeds the nutritional and caloric guidelines of the United Nations. Additional and different foodstuffs are available for those families who can afford higher prices. There is little beef but ample quantities of beans, rice, fruits, and vegetables. Well-balanced meals are provided for children in schools or day care centers, and no deduction is made from the basic ration for meals or snacks. No one goes hungry; there is no need for soup kitchens or food pantries. There are no Third World swollen bellies or emaciated babies.

Like food, clothing is rationed; everyone receives two sets at a price the lowest salary can afford. Again, families with more than the basic income can purchase additional clothes at a higher price. School children wear simple but attractive uniforms — skirts and blouses for the girls and shirts and trousers for the boys. Impeccably clean and neat children come romping out of the poorest of housing. Day care center tots change into play clothes which are kept at the center and laundered there. They are dressed in a rainbow of colors and, like their clothes, these youngsters are

**Margaret E. Ferry, Ed. D.,** has served in the field of health and education for 34 years and has studied health care systems in the USSR, China, Europe, Japan, and Australia, as well as Cuba. A long-time activist around social justice issues in the Episcopal Church, she has been a member of St. Stephen's, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., for the past 18 years.

bright and attractive.

With basic needs for food, water, and clothing adequately fulfilled, medical care for children is in a position to devote attention to health as well as to sickness. From the moment of conception until death, health care is available, accessible, and free of charge for all Cubans; and it is of high quality. Cuban children now experience the lowest infant mortality rate in any nation in Central or South America, and can also look forward to the longest lifespan. Cuba's infant mortality rate and longevity statistics approach those of the United States.

The success of the health care system may be attributed to multiple interdependent causes. The need for shelter has been attacked through vigorous, massive construction and rehabilitation programs. More housing is still needed, and building continues, but new construction and extended-family hospitality together ensure that no one will be homeless in Cuba.

In addition to having the physical needs of children attended to by other systems, the ratio of physicians to patients is about 1:400. The health care system has an adequate number of physicians and has the authority to determine their distribution by speciality and by geographic location according to perceived need.

Family physicians live in the same neighborhood as their patients, provide health education, family planning, preventive medicine, primary care, and care for the chronic illnesses of the elderly. The assumption has been that physicians who live among their patients will know them better, be more accessible, and better understand those problems, environmental or personal, which may affect the health of both children and adults.

For conditions which demand more specialized pediatric care, the family physician makes referrals to the neighborhood clinic, or the most appropriate hospital in the area. Highly specialized, tertiary care is provided in regional hospitals. A new children's hospital was opened during my last visit.

The number, specialities, and placement of physicians have encouraged the development of systems integration between health, housing, education, and production. Physicians can be found in day care centers, schools, universities, housing developments, communities, nursing homes, senior centers, and factories. This strategic placement supports the Cuban belief that the health of the nation, particularly the health of the children, is essential for the future of the country.

In addition to the hungry, thirsty, naked and sick, *Matthew 25* also expressed concern for the prisoner and the stranger. Neither of the trips provided first-hand experience with the prison system, but I did learn that children are not included in the adult system. If a youngster is not doing well in school, is having behavioral problems, or is suspected of petty thievery, he or she becomes a concern of the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, the CDR. This is an organized neighborhood group which deals with local problems and nominates representatives to the municipal CDR. In the case of potential delinquents, the CDR meets with the parents to support them in working out a solution to the problem.

Articles 29 and 30 of the Cuban *Code on Children and Youth* reads:

> The state pays special attention to the development of specialized schools for children with physical or mental handicaps or with behavioral problems, in order to permit them, to the degree possible and according to individual aptitudes, to take care of themselves and become a part of society.
>
> Through the local bodies of the People's Power, the state pays particular attention to minors between the ages of 13 and 17 who are behind in school or have dropped out of the national education system, providing special schools where their scholarship level can be raised and where they can be given job training.

We did not see any of these schools. We did, however, visit a model day care center for hearing-impaired children between 18 months and 6 years old. If spe-

*Continued on page 18*

**School students in Havana.**

# 'A revolution within the Revolution':

Thirty-one years is but the blink of an eye in world history. But in Cuba, 30 years has seen the reordering of society from top to bottom. Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the country has worked to leave behind its colonial past and to shape its own future.

As part of that process, Fidel Castro called the women's movement "a revolution within the revolution," and Cuban women are still defining their role in a society that is yet defining itself. In this sense, the revolution is "an unfinished product," in Castro's words.

Women have gained considerable power in Cuban society, and have been freed of many problems their sisters have in other developing countries because of the government's commitment to health care, nutrition and housing. However, life is still austere — the basics are available, but it means standing in long lines, dealing with ration books and having to buy whatever is for sale that day instead of one's first choice. These hardships, combined with the lingering influence of traditional male attitudes that scorn helping with housework, have made women impatient for speedier reforms.

That women have such high expectations is due in great part to the work of the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women), the national organization for promoting women's rights. It was founded on Aug. 23, 1960, a year after the revolution. At its national headquarters in Havana, Catherine Rivas, FMC's energetic Secretary of Foreign Relations, talked about the ever-evolving role of Cuban women.

Rivas, who speaks fluent English with a trace of a New York accent, was born in the South Bronx and lived there until she was a teenager. Her parents had fled the political repression in pre-revolution Cuba. Much more attention has been paid in the United States, she noted, to those who fled than to those who returned.

"Many Cubans repatriated after the Revolution. For example, I went to a school in Havana for repatriates' children in 1961 — there were 700 kids in my school alone," she said.

FMC headquarters is located on a tree-lined street in a building typical of many government agencies — the former home of an upper-class family. Floors are marble and high-ceilinged rooms are paneled in mahogany.

Rivas said that FMC's membership numbers 3,400,000 women — 80% of the female population over 15 years old.

Women have borne much of the brunt of the enormous changes Cuba has gone through. Before the revolution, women were mostly confined to the home and childrearing. Wealthy women had servants, but poor women often had to take care of their families and work outside the home.

Cuba at that time also had an enormously profitable sex trade (much as do the Philippines and Thailand today) run by the U.S. crime syndicate and corrupt Cuban officials. According to one account, there were special Friday night Miami-Havana flights for businessmen where a woman was available for each passenger.

The massive exploitation of women by the pre-revolution sex industry is a painful memory for Cubans. "Thousands of women were prostitutes," said Rivas. "Less than 12% of the labor force was women, and those working were mostly maids." Women also worked in the tobacco fields, a job inherited from slaves.

And women of color suffered double oppression. Despite Cuba's strong African heritage, "black women were not allowed to work in stores or banks," Rivas noted.

In 1959, Rivas said, "Infant mortality was over 60 per 1,000 live births in the city — the number in the countryside was not even known. Educational standards for women were very low — 70% had less than a third or fourth-grade education, 25% were illiterate. Less than 1% attended university.

"Infant mortality is now about 11 per 1,000 in Cuba. There are many more women university students. In 1987-88, there were 30,000 graduates, 16,600 of whom were women. Half the high school population is women. In adult education, out of 54,000 students, 26,000 were women," she said.

There is a history of a strong feminist movement in pre-revolution Cuba, though it was mostly confined to middle and upper-class women. In 1939, the third Feminist Congress helped push benefits for women.

"In 1940," said Rivas, "a Constitution was passed, and was one of the most advanced in the world in terms of women's rights, but nobody paid attention to it." She added that provisions for women were so good in the 1940 Constitution that when the revolutionary government took power, it simply implemented those provisions until new legislation was passed in 1975.

"The FMC brought together the pre- and post-revolution women's groups. Women were claiming their place in the development of a new society, which couldn't be built with only 50% of the population participating," said Rivas.

It was a huge undertaking to dismantle the colonial structures and redefine women's place in society, Rivas explained. "The first task was the elimination of prostitution. The workers taught them to read and write, got them medi-

# Women's rights in Cuba

by Susan Pierce

Catherine Rivas

cal care, found them jobs, got the pimps jailed. Those who didn't want to change emigrated to Miami.

"The second task was to convince women to join the labor force; this had to be discussed with women and their families. It was a door-to-door job."

Despite the intensive campaign by government workers, women were often unable to deal with the double demands placed on them. "They would work for a week or two and then quit because of responsibilities at home," she said.

In order to facilitate women's entrance into the work force, the government launched a massive day care program, building hundreds of centers, but "it's still not enough. We have a great need for day care," Rivas said.

One problem with social change in developing countries is that it often takes place in urban centers, at the expense of the rural population. Rural culture is usually more traditional and resistant to change. Rivas said that was true in the early days of the FMC's organizing efforts: "At the time of the revolution, there weren't facilities in the countryside for political education, and there were a lot of counter-revolutionary influences. The FMC created the first school for peasant girls. They were taught how to sew, had classes in political education, hygiene and nutrition. When they came to the city, it was their first sight of running water and electricity. Fidel gave each graduate a sewing machine.

"This was in the first decade of the revolution, a time of enormous goals and efforts. In the literacy campaign, 55% of the teachers and 59% of the students were women," said Rivas.

After the ground-breaking advances of the 1960s, said Rivas, "the '70s were the decade of institutionalization." She explained that during that time the *Poder Popular* (Popular Power) — a body of locally-elected officials who oversee daily affairs in the municipalities — was created, a new constitution was written and the first Party Congress took place.

As Cuba was building its legislative infrastructure, women's rights were an important component, she said. And since the center of Cuban life is the family and the revolutionary government's aim has been to effect change starting with the family as the basic unit of society, these rights became part of what was called the Family Code. "All issues dealing with women were taken from the civil code and studied by jurists and the FMC. In 1974, the Family Code was drawn up. On March 8, 1975 — Women's Day in the U.N. International Year of Women — the Family Code was passed." However, Rivas explained, a new code is presently being formulated and a draft will be issued for public discussion because "there are things in the old Family Code that are still discriminatory to women."

"For example," she said, "in the old code, a couple could marry when the man was 16 years old and the woman was only 14 — or even 12 if she was pregnant. This discriminates against the girl, who has to drop out of school and has a frustrated life."

Cuba has the same problems with sexually-transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy as does the United States and other countries. Rivas said the government constantly promotes sex education through the media because "we have to educate adults so they can educate their children," she said. "Sex educators are giving attention to teachers and doctors. But it's still not enough — there's a lot of resistance."

The resistance comes from ingrained cultural habits, held in particular by older people. "Sex education has always been taboo in Latin families," she said and smiled ruefully as she told how she gave a book on sex education to her two nephews, and "their grandmother took the book and hid it."

Attempts to combat biases against homosexuality has run into even greater resistance, said Rivas. "It is a very touchy problem in Cuba and in all Latin societies — there is an aversion to gays. No Cuban law condemns them or limits their rights. It's a social aversion. Sex education tries to explain that being gay is like being left-handed."

But again women suffer from a double standard, as lesbianism is more harshly condemned. Rivas admitted, "People can accept gay men more readily than lesbians. Some fathers say they would rather have their daughter be a prostitute than be gay. We have to be patient, it takes time to change attitudes."

Birth control is an important issue in a developing country and the Cuban government promotes smaller families.

Abortions are not encouraged, but are permitted. Another difficult pre-revolution memory is that abortion was illegal, but wealthy women could get them. Batista, the dictator overthrown by the revolution, allegedly built a hospital to service rich U.S. women who wanted abortions. Poor women were left to back-street butchers and many died.

To prevent more needless deaths, said Rivas, "the revolutionary government made it illegal to have abortions done at home, or not by a doctor, or with inadequate equipment. Abortions are free, and a high number are performed." She noted also that "IUDs are free and birth control pills are available at a low price, as are diaphragms and condoms."

When asked about adoption as an alternative, Rivas said, "Adoptions are rare in Cuba. If an unwed mother carries the baby to term, someone in her family will help take care of it."

The country had to deal with the subject of adoption during the social upheaval caused by the 1980 Mariel boatlift, where over 100,000 were permitted to leave Cuba by sea.

"A lot of children were abandoned by *Marielitos*. Some were adopted but most were taken care of by family and friends," said Rivas.

As Cuban society rapidly changes, so does the foundation of society, the Cuban family. Large families with the mother at home or working nearby were the rule in the past but now "there are approximately 1.6 children per family," said Rivas. "As women get more involved in society and the work force, they have less time for bearing children. Now 39% of the total labor force are women — 54% of working women are technicians."

But since vestiges of traditional Latin macho culture still strongly influence Cuban life, women rarely attain positions of power. "Why aren't there more women in leadership posts in the party, the state and the mass organizations?" asked Castro at the 15th Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions. Rivas agreed women have come a long way, but there was plenty of room for improvement.

"The transformation of society has to start from its fundamental unit, the family. Both men and women have to share responsibility. Women sometimes voluntarily limit themselves by taking all the responsibility for the child care and the housework. And emphasizing double standards in education creates new male chauvinists. If we want a new family, we have to educate the kids," she said.

José-Louis Dominguez, a tour guide and translator with Havanatour, a government tourist agency, told us about the difficulty of being a liberated male in Cuba. He and his wife live with his parents — a common occurrence in a country where housing is in short supply — and he said when he helped his wife with housework or the care of their son, his father would walk by and say disapprovingly, "Are you a man or a baby, to do women's work?"

Later, during dinner, when challenged to prove if he *really* knew how to change a diaper, Dominguez picked up a napkin and proceeded to demonstrate by skillfully diapering an imaginary baby.

According to Rivas, the government tries rigorously to root out sexism wherever it can. "Inspectors check day care centers to make sure play isn't gender-divided — that both boys and girls play equally with trucks and dolls — but it has to be done at home, too," she said.

As women attain more equality, they become dissatisfied with traditional attitudes and in this once-strongly Roman Catholic country there is no longer such a strict bias against divorce. "Everyone has to read the Family Code before they get married," said Rivas. Still, much to the government's distress, four out of every 10 marriages end in divorce.

Though domestic abuse is an endemic problem in the United States and in Central and South America, Rivas said it was not an issue in Cuba. "A battered wife has never been acceptable in Cuban society, even before the revolution," she said. "If a man hits a woman, he's considered less of a man." And child abuse is so repugnant to Cubans that it is extremely rare.

Cubans not only respect women and adore and cherish children, but also the elderly, said Ribas. "The FMC gives an 'Outstanding Grandparent' award. It's the support the grandmothers give at home that has allowed Cuba to advance."

And the country is increasingly faced with an aging population. "The average lifespan has increased dramatically," said Ribas. "It was 54 years in 1959; it's 74 now. We have to build more homes for the elderly. There are even day care centers for them now. It's a new problem in Cuba."

Rivas has been to the United States numerous times to attend meetings and give talks at universities. She said she was impressed with the U.S. women's movement, but was negatively impressed by a sight now commonplace in most U.S. cities — the homeless.

"It had great impact on me," she said. "You would never find a homeless person in Cuba. We have the extended family here, there is always someone to take them in. Before the revolution, there were beggars, many homeless. The people who came in from the countryside looking for work ended up in the streets."

The Cuban government's emphasis on social services, bolstered by the memory of widespread poverty and suffering in the old Cuba, has created a generation that has never gone homeless, hungry or without medical care. Rivas said, "My niece recently went with her swim team to Colombia; all she could talk about when she got back was the beggars. She couldn't conceive of children without food, clothing or a home." TW

# Short Takes

### Whatever happened to clout?

What has happened to the clout of U.S. Protestant mainstream churches? A recent 24-page report, entitled *Progressions,* released by Lilly Endowment, Inc. includes these major findings:

- Baby boomers have dropped out of the churches in droves.
- With church operations increasing in complexity, pastors have become more managers than spiritual guides. As governance has become more participatory, many pastors have lost their sense of authority and influence.
- From the mid-'70s to the mid-'80s the number of ordained women in the United States doubled. But the women's movement has brought new understanding to the meaning of ministry and has prompted some church women to question the institution of ordination itself.
- Differences between denominations are fading. The crucial identity issues tend to focus on conservative/liberal elements within, rather than between, denominations.

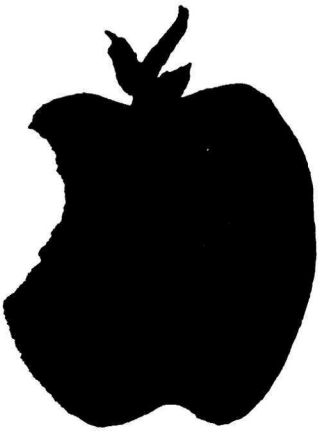
For further information: Lilly Endowment, P.O. Box 88068, Indianapolis, IN 46208, (317) 924-5471.

### Champion of L.A.'s homeless

The Rev. Alice Callaghan, founder of the storefront family center *Las Familias del Pueblo,* was awarded the Los Angeles County Bar Association's 1989 Distinguished Citizen Award for her achievement in relocating some 1,500 homeless people to better surroundings. She is the driving force behind a project to clean up Los Angeles' Skid Row hotels, giving a shelter option to many singles, handicapped and elderly people. The first hotel was dedicated last May, with 10 more in the works.

***Journal of Women's Ministries***
**Winter 1989**

*(Alice Callaghan also sits on the Board of Directors of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of THE WITNESS. — Ed.)*



### All about Eve?

A Tanzanian participant (in the Maryknoll Summer School of Theology) told me how the story of Adam and Eve struck him as a young boy. For him Eve was not a weak creature, a fallen woman, a seductress. He spoke of his secret envy of Eve. The fruit Eve was eating was called an apple in his Bible stories for children. But he had no idea what an apple was; he only knew that they were very expensive in Tanzania.

He imagined an apple would grow like other fruit, high up on a palm tree. It represented an enormous challenge and adventure for a young boy to climb up a palm tree and collect the fruit. Girls would never climb the trees, but instead, pick up the fruit from the ground after they were dropped by the boys.

For him, Eve was an adventuress, a model, to shin up a high palm tree and return with the fruit. What a tough, adventurous woman Eve must have been to do all that! And what a friend to have — because parents always forbade the boys to climb trees! He asked his mother to buy him an apple for his next birthday and found it very appetizing. He wondered how people reading the Bible in his country liked the other, the "agreed" interpretation of this text.

**Dorothea McEwan in *Chrysalis***
**November '89**

### New social model

I am glad to be associated with the men and women who are changing our society. My hope is that Hungary can become a model for other Eastern Bloc countries by combining a free-market economy with socialist goals.

**Bishop Karoly Toth, member**
**Hungarian Parliament**
**Quoted in *Sequoia* 1/90**

### Black Union troops no exception

The movie "Glory" gives the false sense that black troops were an exception to the rule in Civil War combat. Actually, a total of 180,000 blacks had fought in the Union Army by the end of the war.

More than 38,000 died, a 40% higher casualty rate than for white northern troops. Blacks fought in over 250 separate engagements, beginning as early as the fall of 1862. There were also scores of black officers, including abolitionists Major Martin R. Delany and Captain P.B.S. Pinchback.

Ex-slaves, both women and men, worked as spies behind Confederate lines. African-Americans, civilians and soldiers alike, were not passive witnesses in the struggle for freedom. Despite these weaknesses, "Glory" makes a substantial contribution to our awareness of the role of African-Americans in the conflict to abolish human bondage.

**Manning Marable**
***Along the Color Line***

### Central America protest

An interfaith march for an end to the war in Central America is set for March 24 in Washington, D.C., marking the 10th anniversary of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero's assassination. There will be a 9 a.m. prayer service at St. Aloysius Church, followed by a march to the White House, via the Capitol. Civil disobedience is planned. Simultaneous marches will take place in cities across the country. Contact the Archbishop Romero Coalition at (202) 483-3911.

**Children** . . . *continued from page 13*

cialized schools for behavior problems or drop-outs resemble this day care center in expertise and commitment, they should experience considerable success.

As far as the Cubans' treatment of strangers was concerned, we had first-hand experience. Despite our affiliation with "the enemy," we were welcomed and made to feel at home wherever we went. And children were particularly welcome. The 8-year-old American on my first trip became the pal of the maintenance man and the pet of the rest of the staff at the guest house of the Ministry of Education. At the farewell dinner they presented "Ches" with a baseball mitt, on the fingers of which were their autographs in memory of his delight at being taken to a Cuban baseball game. The tears and hugs that followed all around were unforgettable.

Because the U.S. government isolates Cuba, I assumed that everyone else did. I was astonished to discover that Cuba welcomed travelers from all over the world. A ride in the hotel elevator sounded like an international group meeting, and a day at the beach could become a competition in people-watching. There seems to be no end to the Cubans' tolerance for all species of the human race, no matter the color or language.

In its spirit of hospitality to children, Cuba offers a safe haven for children from war-torn or disadvantaged countries. They are housed and educated on the Isle of Youth. Counselors come with the children from their particular cultures to ensure preservation of these cultures. Children also are taught in their native language because it will be their task to return to their native lands in order to share their education with the children of their homelands. Young Pioneers from all over the world also convene periodically on the beautiful beaches of Varadero to share in activities with the Cuban Pioneers.

There is a striking difference between Cuban and U.S. priorities when it comes to children. *Children in Need*, a report of the U.S. Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development stated in its report on the U.S. educational system and disadvantaged children that:

> (The schools) must also reach beyond the traditional boundaries of schooling to improve the environment of the child. An early and sustained intervention in the lives of disadvantaged children, both in school and out, is our only hope for breaking the cycle of disaffection and despair.

The report then goes on to list cost-effective programs for which sufficient U.S. government funding has not been made available: 1) Supplemental Food for Woman and Children (WIC); 2) prenatal care; 3) Medicaid; 4) childhood immunization; 5) preschool education; 6) compensatory education; 7) education for all handicapped children; 8) youth employment and training.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the Cuban health care system for mothers and children funds services covered under items 2, 3, and 4 above. Food rationing takes into account the nutritional needs of the entire population, and day care centers and schools supplement this. Preschool education, item 5, was carried out in 1988 in 1,021 day care centers which served 142,073 children and 131,815 mothers. In 1990 the Federation of Cuban Women expects that 1,283 centers will serve 212,000 children. Education for the handicapped, item 7, begins in day care centers; mainstreaming takes place in first grade if appropriate, or the child continues in special classes. Item 6, compensatory education, is discussed extensively in the *Code on Children and Youth*, but is best summed up in its Article 43:

> According to the Constitution, work is a right, a duty and a point of honor for each citizen. Thus, every young person is obliged to use his creative ability, aptitudes and knowledge to help build the new society.

Our government's protracted attempts to strangle the economy of Cuba by big-bully tactics of isolation are more subtle than the support of the Contras, but potentially as lethal. Trade agreements which force other countries to forgo commerce with Cuba as a precondition to trade with the United States can be devastating. Are we trying to coerce Cuba's economy into collapse to prove we are bigger and better, no matter what human suffering may be caused? Or can't we tolerate a little communist country that is kinder and gentler to its children?

And why should our tax money support Miami's Radio Martí — named almost blasphemously after José Martí, Cuba's "George Washington" — and the development of TV Martí, both intended to beam American propaganda to Cuba?

The Cuban attitude which regards children's development as the most important priority is sadly lacking in the United States, where children are indeed among the least of our brethren. Cuba also sends its teachers and doctors to developing countries to educate and to heal the children, and train teachers and doctors.

Our "Christian" country has not been providing compassion for millions of its children. As we who presume to be called Christians sit in our straight-backed pews, let us beware lest the "Kingdom of God be taken away from (us) and given to a nation producing the fruits of it." We should be aware of what our government is doing — or not doing — for and to children not only in our own country but also the world over. Have we already forgotten Khadafi's daughter, killed by U.S. bombers? Let us expose the absurdities of the little red brochure which tells me that my Cuban friends — either Christian, communist, or both — are my enemies. TW

# U.S. troubador 'objective but not impartial'

Lois Kroehler went to Cuba more than 40 years ago straight out of college, intending to learn Spanish in preparation for work in Costa Rica. She never left Cuba, and today is the only "mainstream" U.S. Protestant church worker to have remained there since pre-revolution days.

Initially an administrative secretary, then English teacher at the Presbyterian secondary school *La Progresiva* in Cardenas, Kroehler's life took a dramatic turn in 1961, when the U.S. broke relations with Cuba. She did not get to visit her family for nine years, waiting until she had assurance from both sides that she would be able to return to Cuba. In '69, '74, and '76 she had to get her passport stamped, "Good for one round-trip to Cuba," to assure she could continue her work, because U.S. passports then read, "Not valid for Cuba, North Viet Nam and North Korea."

After the revolution, more than half the Presbyterians fled from the island. Those who remained did much soul searching to determine why they were looked upon with distrust and suspicion by the government. "We analyzed our actions to see if we as the church, we as Christians, were not responsible for the atheism of many who said they did not believe. Perhaps our lives had presented a God who should have been denied," Kroehler said.

She cited an example from Cuba's early history which illustrated commonly-held attitudes toward the church following the revolution: "Institutionalized religion was introduced to Cuba by the Spanish *conquistadores* They killed most of the indigenous natives and finally captured the last rebel chief, Hatuey. When he was about to be burned at the stake, a priest held out a cross and asked if he would not like to become a Christian and go to heaven. Hatuey looked at the solders' swords which had slain his people and asked, 'Are Christian soldiers going to heaven? If so, I do not want to go there.'"

**Lois Kroehler**

Although not especially political when she first went to Cuba, her capacity for political analysis was stretched by her daily experiences with the revolution.

Kroehler was fond of making biblical comparisons for what was happening in Cuba in the early days of the revolution for visitors from the States. For example:

"To produce the shocking effect that Jesus intended in his time, he might use the word *Communist*, rather than Samaritan in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The 'good Communist' makes many Christians uncomfortable, no?"

In the early '60s, Kroehler joined a team overseeing Christian education in the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba. She also assisted in Presbyterian parishes in Cardenas, and taught at the Protestant seminary in Matanzas. Since 1980 she has served a small parish in the rural town of Coliseo as lay pastor. Initally a missionary, after the revolution she became a lay worker employed directly by the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba. As one expression of her solidarity with the situation of Cubans suffering the effects of the U.S. embargo, she did not accept a car until 1985, even though many Cuban pastors had use of a car much earlier. She often had to leave her home at 5:30 a.m. in order to arrive at a given destination by erratic Cuban bus.

Kroehler became a pioneer in composing new songs for the church. During her 40 years in Cuba she has helped put together approximately 25 songbooks, including at least two major hynmnals. As Director of the Department of Music for the Cuban Ecumenical Council, she encouraged Protestants to lessen their reliance on translations of European and North American hymns. Kroehler stimulated use of music drawing on rhythm and instruments and expressions more familiar to Cuban society. She organized conferences in 1975 and in 1982 which brought together composers and singers to share their creativity and celebrate the growth of the New Song movement within Cuban churches.

In her musical compositions, Kroehler tried to show the similarities that exist in the efforts of Christians and Marxists working together to build a new society. For instance, she set to music the words of Jorge Ricardo Masetti, an Argentine journalist who fought with Fidel in the Sierra Maestra mountains, to illustrate the biblical theme of "weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice":

*We want to know who suffers in order to alleviate their suffering*

*And who laughs so we can rejoice with them in their joy*

*Who is subjugated, so we can help them to liberate themselves*

*And who subjugates in order to combat them with all our might*

*We are objective, but not impartial.*

Most recently she helped edit a new hymnal published in 1989 under the auspices of the Cuban Ecumenical Council, *Toda la Iglesia Canta* (The Whole

Church Sings).

Kroehler comes from a family with a strong ecclesiastical heritage. Her father is a retired UCC minister. Two brothers, Armin and Bill, are UCC missionaries in Japan. While on leave to visit them in 1974, she had a "small world" experience. "Would you believe I was taken to a Cuban restaurant in Tokyo by one of my former students who works in the Cuban embassy there?" This past summer the Kroehlers had a reunion in Bremerton, Wash. on the 67th wedding anniversary of their parents.

Her relatives and friends in the States are always surprised that she wants to go back to Cuba after such visits. But Kroehler has strong feelings about her vocation.

"I was shocked, saddened, unbelieving when I saw a TV commercial showing a choice of eight different kinds of meat combinations for dogs, when two out of every three persons in this world go to bed hungry at night. We have rationing in Cuba, to assure an equitable distribution of foodstuffs across the countryside. We are a developing society, and of course, the U.S. embargo has taken its toll. The Cuban churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have taken strong stands condemning the U.S. embargo as causing needless suffering for the people," she said.

In an unpretentious way, for more than 40 years, Lois Kroehler has been living out the concept of "Christian presence." She became an astute observer of developments within Cuba, an articulate advocate for the vitality inherent in the life of post-1959 Cuban churches. She has shared her perceptions through letters, occasional visits to the United States, and extended conversations with many visitors to Cuba from various Christian communities. The quintessential modern "missionary" in the best sense of that word, she went — and remained — where she was needed. — **Alice Hageman and Mary Lou Suhor.** TW

# Churches crucial in

A young woman comes and stands before the congregation to sing a Christmas carol.

I am seated in the Ebenezer Baptist Church. In the adjacent parish hall is a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a copy of the proclamation of a King holiday signed by Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta.

The young woman's voice is fresh and clear. The tune is *Greensleeves*, with familiar words: "This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the son of Mary."

It feels like home. But I am not home in Raleigh or even in Atlanta at Dr. King's Ebenezer Baptist Church. I am in Havana, Cuba.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus made a landing in Cuba. Greeted by brown-skinned Taino, Siboney and Guanajatabey natives, he thought he was in India. He was confused.

Landing in Havana almost 500 years later, given my own misconceptions, I could just have easily have been confused. After all, isn't Cuba an atheistic state? Haven't all Christians long since departed for Miami following the revolution in 1959?

Raul Gomez Treto, a Cuban Roman Catholic layman, said in his book, *The Church and Socialism in Cuba*, that the pre-1959 Cuban church was a weak church. It was poorly attended. Of the 72.5% of the population claiming to be Catholic, 75% of them were non-practicing. It was a church controlled by those with money and power, and administered mostly by Spanish priests and religious.

Raul Suarez, the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and President of the Cuban Ecumenical Council, confirmed Treto's account in a meeting where he explained some of the history of the Protestant church in Cuba.

Suarez remembered the pre-revolution Protestant churches: "The message was simple. Don't drink, smoke, curse or dance. To tell Cubans they'll go to hell if they dance is very surely to put them there. A Cuban who isn't allowed to dance is already in hell."

But the post-revolution churches became more inclusive. Suarez celebrates the changing of the words in a hymn: "Before the revolution we sang, 'Apart from the world, I live my faith. I leave the world and follow Jesus.' Now the words go, 'I go to the world because it is the object of God's love.'"

After the revolution, Suarez said, 90% of Methodist and 70% of Baptist and Presbyterian clergy followed the money and deposed power structure to the United States. By 1970, half the Episcopalian congregations had left. What this did, in essence, to the Christian church remaining in Cuba was to force it to understand its history and mission in light of the social and economic realities of the revolution.

Since the revolution, Christians in Cuba have continued to theologize and redefine the church in the context of Vatican II in the early '60s, the development of liberation theology, and the pronouncements of Latin American Roman Catholic bishops in Medellin in 1968 and Puebla in 1979.

The rise of base communities in Central and South America, relying heavily on lay ministry, and the liberating mes-

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# breaking barriers

by Jim Lewis

sage that God calls the church to "a preferential option for the poor," closely paralleled the changes and growth the Cuban church has experienced since 1959.

Reminders of Cuba's colonial past are never far away. From Matanzas, a port city east of Havana, runs the "Hershey train." Built and owned by the huge U.S. candy manufacturer, it linked the company's sugarcane plantations and Havana.

Up on a hill, the Evangelical Theological Seminary overlooks Matanzas harbor. The seminary's dean, Oden Marichal, an Episcopalian, has invited Presbyterian theologian, Sergio Arce Martinez, who teaches at the seminary, to have a conversation with us. Joining the group is an Episcopal priest who pastors a local congregation and a Canadian woman studying at the seminary. The discussion goes on as a blinding rainstorm pounds against the building.

Arce talks about the significance of liberation theology in Cuba but is quick to point out that Cuba's revolution happened prior to the publication of Peruvian Gustavo Gutierrez's monumental work, *Theology of Liberation*.

"Our revolution has already taken place. Our major concern isn't for *liberation*, but for *creation*. As helpful as the Exodus events are, our major focal point is Genesis. Creating a new society is what we are about," said Arce.

That task has been anything but easy, particularly given the fact of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, which has forced it to rely heavily on trade with the USSR and Eastern European nations.

We discuss the recent events in Eastern Europe and how they will affect Cuba, a question that emerges in practically every conversation. Cubans are concerned about their future because Cuba could find itself more and more isolated as the communist bloc nations of Eastern Europe come unglued. Cubans fear the possibility of economic cutbacks by Eastern European trading partners as those nations become more solicitous of and dependent on U.S. capital and government aid.

Valuable subsidized sugar markets in the USSR, along with vital trade links involving oil, food, and machinery could dry up as the cold war thaws and political vultures in the United States declare moral and economic victory over communism.

That kind of shallow analysis, combined with changing military strategies in the United States, could spell trouble. Les Aspin, Democratic representative from Wisconsin, recently commented on the military implications of the cold war thaw, east and west. He said, "The military is going through a real soul-searching. They are looking for a mission."

That mission, given the fact of the invasion of Panama, could well trigger new covert, and even overt, military operations against Cuba and deeper involvement in Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

Cuba was repeatedly invaded and colonized by European and U.S. forces over a 500-year period. Now, once again, Cuba finds itself forced to respond to the great giants of the north, the United States and the USSR.

The fall of the Berlin Wall is being felt on this island, which is just 90 miles


**Padre Miguel Tamayo, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral in Havana, baptizes Enrique, son of Enrique Olivera Ojedo and Angela Ojedo Falcon, during Sunday services.**

south of Florida. That 90-mile stretch is its own kind of wall — a wall of water that must be parted for the good of both Cuba and the United States.

Padre Miguel Tamayo splashes water on a child being baptized on Sunday morning at the Episcopal cathedral in Havana. There are about 50 people present. Among them is an older woman who has recovered from having both knees operated on and can say nothing bad about the health care in Cuba. However, she is unhappy about the fact that chicken and meat are in short supply at local state markets.

She expresses the same hope that people at the seminary shared with us. Cuba, they all say, needs personal as well as economic contact with the United States. They see the church as the vehicle for breaking through the wall between the two countries. Exchanges of people are vital in order for Cuba to lose its demonic image in the eyes of the United States, so that diplomatic and economic relations can be re-established.

Cubans are conscious of the role the churches can play in defusing potential conflict between peoples or nations. They hope that can happen with Cuba and the United States. They remember Jesse Jackson's 1984 visit to Cuba. Jackson and Fidel Castro attended a United Methodist church service in Havana where Castro was touched by Jackson's sermon. Hope runs high that Pope John Paul II will pay a visit to Cuba in the near future.

The new church in Cuba, built since the revolution, has made a profound discovery. There is widespread recognition that atheism has been an unexpected gift of God. That admission on the part of many Cuban Christians has profound implications in the building of a new society.

The pre-revolutionary church, out of touch with the poor and representing only the interests of the rich, was compelled by the nature of the Gospel and the reality of the revolution to confront its own elitist mission and misguided evangelical piety.

In a conversation with Fernando Bielsa-Garcia, a Communist Party official, he confessed that he had belonged to the Catholic Youth Program when he was younger. However, when forced to choose between a reactionary church serving the rich and a political party working for revolutionary change for the poor, he abandoned the church.

Before the revolution, many Cubans became disillusioned as they watched their church side with colonial domination.

Fidel Castro was raised by a Catholic mother in Oriente Province, an area owned by U.S. fruit companies. Even though he was influenced profoundly by Bible stories learned under Jesuit tutelage, particularly the Moses stories, the church offered him no model for change.

Since then, Castro has grown in his appreciation of the church as a revolutionary force. In the book *Fidel and Religion*, Frei Betto, a Brazilian Dominican priest, interviews Castro, who reveals a changed attitude towards religion. The book should become compulsory reading for North Americans concerned about the presence of a new theology and church in Cuba. Thirty years has made a difference, given the changes in the church.

In Jean Stubb's book, *Cuba: The Test of Time*, Angel Ortiz, a black minister from Matanzas, gives personal testimony to the centrality of atheism to his new understanding of evangelistic faith:

> "The revolution has motivated my faith on more than one occasion. In my personal life, I have lived crises of faith, crises that have stemmed from incomprehension of the church and its incomprehension of the struggles of society. I am by no means enamored of pain, but the revolutionary process has stimulated me, as it has stimulated other young Christians to play a conscious part in it. This implies strengthening one's Christian identity in a society that calls itself Marxist, socialist, atheist . . . Daily practice in Cuban society has inspired me to understand that theoretical atheism is not as important as practical atheism, and that at times religious people can be atheist . . .We preach what we don't practice."

Ortiz goes on to say, "We need to evangelize from a different perspective, from that of helping to build the new society. The best values of human beings, men and women alike, must be reaffirmed."

Cuba has come through a period of history, immediately following the revolution, when Christians weren't welcomed into the structures for creating the new society. The memories were too fresh of a church co-opted by the rich, and Christians were therefore denied government and occupational positions.

But the situation is different now. The Cuban church, with a revised and renewed sense of evangelism, one compatible with the goals of the revolution, could well offer important gifts needed if the goals of the revolution are to be fully realized. The church is now qualified, because of its commitment to the revolution, to offer a constructively critical voice on behalf of a more open news media and social, political and cultural dissent.

All of that may well depend on how successful the church can be both in Cuba and the United States in reducing Cuba's isolation through the exchange of Christians willing to work at changing U.S. policy. Heightening the already existing tensions between the two countries through a continued policy of economic and social isolation will not contribute to peace.

A simple slogan might read: "No to embargos — Yes to exchanges."

# Havana is not East Berlin

## by J. Antonio Ramos

Cuba today is the focus of much attention, curiosity and speculation because of the dramatic changes taking place in Eastern Europe and the unexpected turn of events in the Soviet Union. So much hype is being given by the Western powers and its media to these events, that in-depth coverage of other historic changes taking place in South Africa and its neighboring countries of Angola and Namibia is being overlooked in the furor.

It seems that in the Western world view, especially that of the United States and Great Britain, the evil of racism and the scourge of apartheid are lesser sins than those of ideology. If one compares the attitudes toward the dramatic changes in Europe versus the ones in Africa, it is obvious that the former have the blessing, encouragement, and support of the West, while the collapse of the immoral scourge of apartheid in South Africa is taking place in spite of, and quite often against, the wishes of much of the Western world.

It is no wonder that while Sakharov and Walesa were immortalized, Mandela was left to rot in prison for 27 years. And Archbishop Tutu and other religious leaders of South Africa are often ridiculed and considered by some to be dangerous "subversives."

As we look at Cuba historically and even today, the issues of ideology and racism cannot be separated. That connection was quite clear to me in my recent trip there with THE WITNESS. I will try to provide some insights as to how these two historic movements — which are shaping a new world order in Europe and Africa — particularly relate to Cuba.

Since 1981, when I was on the staff of the National Council of Churches' Latin American and Caribbean office, I have had the opportunity to travel to Cuba on various occasions, mostly at the invitation of its Ecumenical Council. Contrary to what the majority of people in the United States may think, both the Roman Catholic Church and the various Protestant so-called historical churches, as well as the Pentecostals, have continued to operate and expand their work and ministry in Cuba.

Two summers ago, at the invitation of the Ecumenical Council, I spent six weeks in Cuba on sabbatical, at which time I was able to preach in various congregations, travel on my own to different parts of the country, spend time in private homes, and have conversations with diverse sectors of the population.

Earlier, in the summer of 1984, just after the conclusion of the U.S. Presidential primaries, I had the privilege of accompanying the Rev. Jesse Jackson in his peace trip to Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba, which turned out to be a momentous occasion for their religious communities — especially in Cuba, where Fidel Castro attended the ecumenical service where Jesse preached.

It is out of such experiences that I share these reflections, as we look to the future in this rapidly transforming world, also taking into account the recent invasion of Panama by U.S. troops. For while there is progress in disarmament and demilitarization in the North among the superpowers, there is regression in the South, especially in our hemisphere. Civil war, human rights violations, poverty, injustice and death are still rampant, and a growing tension exists between the United States and Cuba.

A new heaven can be constructed to the North, while the South remains in the shadows of hell and death. Increasingly now, because of the North's attention to itself, the South will be the Lazarus of the parable, recipient of the "crumbs that fall from the table" of the rich man.

What about Cuba? The visit by THE WITNESS group was indeed a timely one. We were there in the midst of two significant events: the International Latin-American Film Festival which brought thousands of people from different parts of the world; and, more significant for our visit, the observance of the Day of Mourning (similar to Memorial Day) for those Cuban military and civilian personnel who had died in international service, especially in Angola.

At the memorial service, Castro gave a foreboding speech, exalting Cuba's contributions to the liberation of Angola from South African imperialism and the ushering in of independence in Namibia. It was also a serious analysis of events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and their possible repercussions on Cuba. He referred to "the current crisis in the socialist camp, from which we can only expect negative economic consequences for our country."

Undoubtedly, because of its trade relations with Eastern Europe and the USSR, there will be additional hardships for Cuba over and above the conditions of

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scarcity created by the 30-year U.S. embargo. This will place further demands for austerity measures, and will add frustration to efforts underway to make the economy more self-reliant.

In a recent speech in Miami, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, predicted that *perestroika* would soon reach Cuba and Central America. Only history will tell. Yet my question remains: Is *perestroika* exportable to a hemisphere where the fundamental issues are those of life and death, not of individual freedoms? Conditions have worsened, especially in Central America over the last 10 years, in spite of the electoral democratization which has taken place.

And how do conditions in Cuba today differ from those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union?

The struggle in Cuba in the late 1950s, as has been the case of Nicaragua more recently, or in the Philippines, was against oligarchical power structures benefiting an elite minority. The regimes of Batista, Somoza, and Duvalier exemplified dictatorial, oligarchical, oppressive systems, often allied with military powers. Cuba's struggle turned into a nationalist and anti-imperialist movement because of the historic pattern of U.S. behavior in the hemisphere. It started with the economic and military occupation of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898 and, since then, of Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama, etc. Because of that, the U.S. embargo against Cuba did not create humilation and submission. Instead, Cubans had a greater sense of national pride, internal strength, and discipline in the face of hardship and austerity.

As a Puerto Rican, whose country's history has been closely tied to Cuba in our struggles for independence from Spain and later from the United States, I have always appreciated Cuba's continued solidarity with Puerto Rico.

In general, electoral democratization in Latin America has not led to economic democratization; rather, social and economic situations have worsened. The fundamental concern in Latin America has been not only to struggle against oligarchical power, but also how to bridge the economic and social gaps under the prevailing conditions of poverty and corruption.

Cuba chose a socialist model, which in spite of its flaws is quite different, qualitatively and quantitatively, from that of Eastern European countries. That this model has proven effective is evident when one compares the quality of life in Cuba with the rest of Latin America in terms of health, nutrition, education, participation in mass organizations and so on.

The situation in Cuba is also quite different religiously and ethnically speaking. There is not a monolithic church, or a popular religious body in confrontation with the political power, or a church that has a hold on the population. Ethnically, Cuba does not face the multi-cultural problems of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. There is strong Cuban identity and it is a culture proud of its Afro-Latin heritage. This was evident in the Cubans' warm response to Jesse Jackson's visit in his role as a religious leader, a black person, and a champion of the causes of the poor, the minorities, and the Third World. To understand Cuba's role in Southern Africa one needs to look at the historical connection with its African roots and the participation of blacks in Cuba's own independence and revolutionary struggles.

My own view is that in contrast to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, there is a wide base of popular participation and support for the Communist Party. The continued rejuvenation of the party and government apparatus, and the process referred to as "rectification," has intensified. Events in the socialist world will push the process even further.

I believe that ultimately in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Cuba, as well as in the rest of the world, the fundamental question for the future is whether there will be a true democratization of *all* sectors of society — and a democratization process that considers economic and social equality to be a primary goal. TW


**Raul Suarez, left, head of Cuba's Ecumenical Council, with the author at the CEC office on the grounds of the Episcopal Cathedral, Havana.**

# How not to evangelize

by Mary Lou Suhor

Cuban history provides some clues, in this "Decade of Evangelism" proclaimed by the Episcopal Church, of how *not* to evangelize. One of the first Episcopal worship services held in Havana was presided over by Bishop Benjamin Whipple in 1871 aboard a U.S. gunboat anchored in Havana harbor. According to Cuban theologian Adolfo Ham, "This act was to become typical of the direct relation of U.S. political and economic interests in Cuba to the development of Cuban Protestantism."

On the Roman Catholic side, most are familiar with the entry of Catholicism with Columbus and the subsequent pairing of "cross and sword" as the *conquistadores* proved invincible against the indigenous tribes who suffered genocide at their hands. Christians aware of this history are already alerting their denominations to the injustice and insensitivity of "celebrating" the 500th anniversary of the "discovery of America" — seen by Latin American and Caribbean nations as the beginning of a long history of oppressive Spanish colonialism.

But the story of early Protestantism after the so-called Spanish-American war also produced its share of cultural imperialism as missionaries "targeted" Cuba for evangelism. One could almost picture Protestant Mission Board members rubbing their hands in glee, given some of the public statements of this period. Perhaps one of the best examples of this was Methodist Bishop Warren Candler, who in late 1898 returned from Cuba proclaiming it "our ripest, nearest, neediest mission field."

Bishop Candler's phrasing was classic: "The churchmen of our land should be prepared to invade Cuba as soon as the army and navy open the way, to invade Cuba in a friendly, loving Christian spirit, with bread in one hand and the Bible in the other."

Candler's hand might have held bread, but it also grasped a bottle of Coke. He persuaded his older brother, Coca-Cola exec Asa Candler, to enter Cuba as a new market, and they both set about to capture the island for Methodism and Coca-Cola. Bishop Candler raised over $100,000, mostly for church property, and by 1915 his mission led all other Protestants in Cuba, both in membership and number of U.S. missionaries. Asa opened the first Coca-Cola bottling plant in 1906 in Havana, the second in Santiago in 1913, to take advantage of sales at the U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo. Grateful for skyrocketing profits, Asa in turn helped Warren, who also owned stock in the company, to finance several major religious enterprises for Methodism.

Other Protestant ministers running schools, clinics and dispensaries in rural areas were similarly led to accept financial assistance from Hershey and United Fruit Company, putting them in compromising positions during labor strikes and worker disputes. All of these factors led Protestantism to become committed to homeland mission boards, U.S. businessmen, and U.S. foreign policy.

The tone for U.S. occupation was set by General Leonard Wood. In 1900 he wrote to President McKinley from his position as head of the American military government in Cuba: "The people here, Mr. President, know that they are not ready for self-government, and those who are honest make no attempt to disguise the fact. We are going ahead as fast as we can but we are dealing with a race that has been steadily going downhill for 100 years and into which we must infuse new life, new principles, new methods."

In marked contrast to Wood's words, "downhill for the last 100 years," Cubans characterize that same period as *cien años de lucha* — 100 years of struggle. They were well on the way to winning their War for Independence against Spain before the United States intervened and began to rewrite Cuban history. The United States changed the name of the conflict to the Spanish-American War, and after victory, forced the Platt Amendment upon the island, calling for the leasing of naval stations on Cuban soil and the right of the United States to intervene militarily, if necessary, in Cuban affairs. This set Cuba back into colonial status with a new master.

The U.S. model of economic penetration skewed the Cuban economy. By 1933, with the United States investing profitably in Cuban industry, some 60% of the native population lived outside the money economy. One historian calls this period "*Plattismo sin la Emienda Platt.*" "Intervention without the Platt Amend-

ment" presumed complicity of Cuba's domestic oligarchy to assure an administration capable of conducting itself in accord with the interests of Wall Street and the State Department.

When the Cuban Revolution intervened to change that situation, Fidel Castro adopted a socialist model of development. Some of the resulting accomplishments of the revolution in the areas of health, women's rights, and education which have propelled Cuba to leadership among the Third World and Non-Aligned Nations, are discussed in other articles in this issue.

Those who disagreed with Cuba's nationalization of schools and industries fled the country. This included more than half the Protestant missionaries, dependent on their U.S. boards for pensions and operating budgets, and dependent, too, on "the American way of life."

Surely here was a strange twist, Raul Gomez-Treto, a noted Havana Catholic layman, marveled. Christians, who considered themselves "spiritual," left in multitudes because of material changes in their lives, and communists, whom Christians called "materialists," stayed to try to build a new society with better distribution of goods, he said.

In a similar vein, Sergio Arce, professor of theology at the Protestant seminary at Matanzas, once told a visiting U.S. pastor that he is frequently asked in Western countries, "How is it possible to be a Christian in a communist country?" to which he responds, "How is it possible to be a Christian in a capitalist country?"

Arce's response has deep theological implications for the future of the missionary enterprise, and for evangelization.

The Cuban churches, which before the revolution ran schools, hospitals, and clinics, began to critically analyze their failures and to reflect upon their new role in society, but by and large they were ill-equipped, theologically and economically, to deal with how to serve God in a Marxist land.

Commenting on how mission churches were dependent on their sending bodies, J. Merle Davis, author of "The Cuban Church in a Sugar Economy," concluded, "We have here reached the crux of the economic problem of the missionary church — not only in Cuba but in many other lands. How can a relatively expensive institution, a product of an alien, high-grade economy and living standards, be indigenized and financed in countries of lower economic standards where the bulk of the church members are drawn from the classes of the lower economic levels?"

By August of 1960, all U.S. firms had been nationalized, and by October, most Cuban firms. The United States declared an embargo on all U.S. exports to Cuba in 1960, and in 1961 broke diplomatic relations with the island.

By 1961, thousands of Cuban exiles had emigrated to the United States. In April of that year, many of them took part in the U.S.-backed mercenary invasion of the Bay of Pigs, with several priests and one Methodist minister among them. Three priests, all Spanish nationals who had served in Cuba and accompanied the troops as chaplains, were captured. Cubans turned the invaders back in 72 hours, and Castro read, in his victory speech, the following proclamation, prepared by the mercenaries' head priest-chaplain, intended to be broadcast after the mercenaries won:

> The liberating forces have landed on the beaches of Cuba. We come in the name of God, justice and democracy to restore the rights that have been abridged, the freedom that has been trampled upon and the religion that has been subjugated and slandered. We do not come because of hatred, but because of love; we come to bring peace even if to earn it we must wage war.
>
> The Assault Brigade is constituted by thousands of Cubans who in their totality are Christian and Catholic. Our struggle is that of those who believe in God against the atheists, the struggle of spiritual values against materialism, the struggle of democracy against communism. Ideologies can be vanquished only by superior ideology, and the only ideology that can vanquish the Communist ideology is the Christian ideology. That is why we have come and that is why we fight.
>
> Catholics of Cuba: our military might is crushing and invincible, and even greater is our moral strength and our faith in God and in His protection and in His help. Cuban Catholics: I embrace you on behalf of the soldiers of the liberating army . . .

In historic context, then, government hostility toward the churches can be understood, if not condoned. The missionary effort, with notable exceptions of course, proved inglorious.

On an ecumenical trip to Cuba in 1975, I heard a visiting church official congratulating a Cuban administrator on what he had seen. Impressed by advances in medicine, education, housing, the visitor said he thought that the Cubans had developed a truly Christian society by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, providing shelter for the homeless. The Cuban corrected, "I know you mean that as a compliment, but you are mistaken. These advances have been accomplished by a Marxist-Leninist methodology. When Christians had our country, they raped it."

But what about the future for the churches in Cuba? Early resentment toward the churches by the Communist Party has somewhat dissipated. Even Castro has said that "nobody wants to hear again that for centuries, the church didn't deal with those problems," and it is time to move on, he indicated. Today progressive Christians in the churches perceive an openness on the part of the

government for rapprochement.

When our WITNESS editorial group visited Havana's Catholic Cathedral in December we saw a sign in the vestibule saying "The Pope is coming." And Fidel Castro in his conversations with Frei Betto, published as the book, *Fidel and Religion,* discusses the phases he has gone through in dealing with the churches after the revolution, even indicating an openness now to Christians joining the Communist Party. Fidel is quoted in the book as saying to a group of Chilean Christians for Socialism that believers can take a revolutionary stand, and "Christians and Marxists can join in a strategic alliance to carry out social change." Later, to Jamaicans, he said, "It isn't enough just to respect each other; we must cooperate with each other."

And in a 1980 speech, Castro said, "I don't know what the imperialists think about this (Christian-Marxist alliance). But I'm absolutely convinced the formula is highly explosive." He totally supports the church's option for the poor, which he sees as a real advance, both theologically and politically. *Fidel and Religion* has been published in 22 languages, and 2 million copies have been sold in 29 countries.

Cuba's official publication, *Granma,* now regularly carries articles reporting on religion. Last summer it ran a full-page interview with Msgr. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, director of the Cuban Catholic Bishops' Secretariat, on the proposed visit of the Pope. In its weekly review (after THE WITNESS trip), it carried not only an account of the burial of Cuba's Angolan war dead, but on page four, a three column story entitled "Cuban Episcopal Church Has Three Deaconesses," featuring an interview with the Rev. Marta Lopez, who heads two Havana province churches. It quotes Bishop Emilio Hernandez of Cuba, "Just as women in Cuba are leaders in the country's political and economic life they are taking major roles in religious affairs." The article cites that Marta Lopez, in addition to her church duties, has also been active as a member of the Federation of Cuban Women, a union, and the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution. Cuba's other deaconesses are Griselda Delgado, in Santiago and Nerva Cott, in Matanzas province.

Cuban-born Bishop Hernandez was out of the country during our visit, at a meeting exploring the possibilities of a new autonomous Caribbean church province comprised of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba. An interview with Bishop Hernandez by the Rev. Cora Cheney Partridge appeared in THE WITNESS in January 1986.

In sum, Cubans who have traveled recently in the United States are shocked by the human callousness and indifference which tolerates homelessness and drug dealing that they see on U.S. streets. To be sure, Cubans are economically strapped by a battered economy and foreign debt, as are the rest of the Latin nations, plus a 30-year-old blockade imposed by the United States. But they feel that given their history of underdevelopment, their revolution has proceeded apace, and if anything, it is the American Revolution that is in trouble.

## Resources

*Fidel and Religion,* Fidel Castro's conversations with Frei Betto, Touchstone (Simon and Schuster) New York.

*Religion in Cuba Today,* Alice Hageman and Phil Wheaton, Association Press, New York.

*Cuba: People Questions,* Friendship Press, New York, especially "Religion: Cuba," by Margaret E. Crahan; Introduction, Mary Lou Suhor.

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"Georgia Methodism and Coca-Cola," Institute for Southern Studies pamphlet, Atlanta, Ga. TW