

FROM ATLANTA OFFICE

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Cuban Missions Face Greatest Opportunity

March 1, 1960

ATLANTA, Ga--(BP)---"Southern Baptist missionaries in Cuba report today the greatest opportunity in history to win Cuba for Christ," according to B. M. Crain of Atlanta, who has returned from a tour of Southern Baptist mission stations in Cuba.

Crain, business manager of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, is a veteran observer of the Cuban situation, having conducted four tours of the country in previous years. This was his ninth trip to the area.

"Cuba has religious freedom and separation of church and state for the first time," Crain reported. "Our people feel safe to go and come at night to attend worship services as they please. The difference in the way the people now live and the way they used to live is startling." No church now receives government subsidy, he says.

Crain reports that since 1959, 10,000 classrooms have been opened, many in the countryside where the children never had an opportunity to attend public schools. Many teachers with degrees are teaching for the first time, because there were not enough classrooms and no compulsory school law.

The Cuban government has built 10,000 new homes in the interior. One missionary said, "In my area many homes were sold to people who had lived in shacks of thatch with dirt floors, and the land was given with the homes in order that the people might raise their food. Payments are set according to income of the people."

Minimum wages for sugar plantation workers have been raised from 45 cents a day to \$4. The government has established commissaries for the laborers to buy at low rates their clothing and food.

Cuba's first Social Security was enacted January 1, 1960.

Soldiers and police are no longer allowed to drink in public places while in uniform, Crain said. If they do they automatically lose their jobs.

New work has been opened by Southern Baptists in the swamplands of Cuba, which cover 4000 square miles and 32,000 people. There had been no religious services in this area. A missionary now spends half time there, and in May a seminary graduate will go to give full time there. The government is draining much of the swampland for rice.

The people in the swamplands first heard the gospel message through the Southern Baptist radio program. "That area was a closed book until the revolution," says Crain.

Southern Baptists work in the four western provinces, with approximately half of the six million Cubans; American Baptists work in the two eastern provinces.

There are 166 Southern Baptist missionaries, including wives, with 84 churches, 8750 members, and 201 missions. All but 10 of the 166 missionaries are natives of Cuba. Last year, there were 451 baptisms, 361 Sunday schools with an enrollment of 14,826, and 199 Training Unions with an enrollment of 2701.

Southern Baptists have eight primary schools with 610 children enrolled, and a Baptist seminary in Havana, which has an enrollment of 24; 16 of those are ministerial students. Four preachers, graduating in May, will face five vacancies to be filled.

Cuban Baptists contributed more than \$175,000 to all causes in 1959.

"One of the greatest needs in Cuba is buildings," said Crain. "There is not enough space to take care of the people who come."

Southern Baptists maintain a modern student center near the University of Havana campus. Thirty Baptist students live in the center and help to carry on the BSU work on the campus. Of the 25,000 enrolled at the University, 250 are Baptists--a ratio of one to 100. The over-all ratio of Baptists to the total population of Cuba is one to 400.

Crain will conduct a tour of Cuba and Southern Baptist missions leaving Miami May 12, and returning in time for the Woman's Missionary Union convention on May 15.

Two Thousand Institutional Missions Planned for 1960

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ATLANTA, Ga--(BP)--Two thousand missions in institutions will be started the last half of 1960, if goals recently set for the 30,000 Movement are reached.

This was only one goal and emphasis set by the committee of the 30,000 Movement and the Baptist Jubilee Advance committee on church extension for 1962 meeting in Nashville, Tenn. (Both committees have same membership).

"The new plans for the remainder of the 30,000 Movement period give great encouragement to believe that the 30,000 goal can be reached. From the beginning leaders in the various state conventions have given splendid co-operation and it is expected that these periodic emphases will give fresh impetus to the excellent work already being done," said Arthur B. Rutledge of Atlanta, director of the Division of Missions, Home Mission Board, and chairman of the committee.

The committee set goals through 1964 to start 20,000 more missions and churches to complete the goal of 30,000. The goals are 3500 in 1960, 4000 in 1961, 8000 in 1962, 2500 in 1963, and 2000 in 1964.

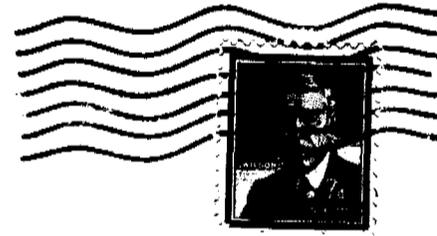
The emphases will vary during the years--hence the 1960 emphasis on institutions, on new Sunday schools in first half of 1961, on town and rural areas in second half of 1961, on new missions and churches everywhere during the big year of extensions in 1962, and on language areas in 1963.

The institutional missions will be in such places as hospitals, convalescent homes, jails, juvenile homes, fire houses, industries, trailer camps, and other like situations.

Also planned by the committee were activities to be promoted, as association mission committees, and promotion of 30,000 Movement in various meetings.

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