

September 8, 1961

Cuban Dilemma: Doors
More Open, Nearer Shut

ATLANTA (BP)--"The doors of opportunity in Cuba are wider open and at the same time nearer to being closed than ever before," reported a Southern Baptist mission leader here following a six-day trip to the island.

In explaining his statement, Loyd Corder of Atlanta, added, "The response of the people to the gospel is greater, probably because they are very much aware of the threat of atheism.

"At the same time, there are rumors the government plans to establish a National Church. With such a Church they would pay the preachers' salaries and thereby attempt to control the content of their message."

Corder, secretary of the language groups ministries department of the Baptists' Home Mission Board, supervises, from Atlanta, Southern Baptists' mission work on the island.

He found Cuba a changed country from his trip a year ago. Flags with the hammer and sickle flew everywhere in Havana. They were put up recently to welcome the Soviet astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, and had not been taken down.

Corder, who speaks Spanish fluently, heard the Communist vocabulary everywhere. And the vaunted literacy campaign of the Castro regime seemed to be aimed more at indoctrinating the illiterates than at educating them, he reported.

"I noticed a great change in the feeling of the people toward the government since my last visit," he said, indicating it was not as favorable as before. "Many of our Baptist workers had wondered if this socialism of Castro's was Russian Communism, but now there can be little doubt of it."

Only nine people flew to Cuba on the plane with Corder, but between 75 and 100 crowded the DC-7 when he left. In fact, the plane was so crowded Corder's baggage was left in Havana.

During his wait at the airport and in his check through customs he witnessed several heartbreaking scenes of relatives being left as visas expired. One woman became hysterical when called out of line for a check, but she was finally allowed to leave.

Corder's department supports six missionaries who are United States citizens and 150 national workers in the four western provinces of Cuba. The missionaries are now the largest group of Protestant missionaries there. And they are exploiting every opportunity for preaching the gospel.

Herbert Caudill of Havana, superintendent of mission work in Cuba, said, "There is a feeling we must exert ourselves to the utmost. The president of the Brotherhood is seeking to enlist 1,000 men to work at establishing and attending missions for preaching and Sunday schools. The urgency of the situation is felt."

Corder said the Cuban people express amazement the missionaries remain, but also appreciation for their staying. Four missionaries have left; five Cuban pastors have come to the United States.

The nationals who left either did not want their children raised under Communism, or they wanted to protest the situation, Corder says. However, many pastors said, "They need us now more than ever. We are disposed to stay and preach no matter what the future holds. The Lord has put us here to serve the people."

Caudill reports four schools were "intervened" a few months ago, and four school buses were taken. However, the schools were returned and the buildings are now used for other church activities. "We were told the buses would also be returned, Caudill said.

As examples of the growth of the work, Caudill reports the largest attendance at assemblies, an expected theological institute enrollment of 40 and the distribution of 1/3-million tracts in a short period.

Fidel Castro's sister, Augustina, was recently married in one of the Baptist churches. Mrs Caudill was invited and attended. At the services she talked with Raul Castro, brother to Fidel.

Raul asked if they had been hindered in any way in their work. When they replied they had not, Raul said, "You will not be bothered unless you get mixed up in counter-revolution."

Caudill says, "So far times are favorable to the preaching of the gospel in Cuba. How long they will continue no one knows."

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Folks and Facts.....

(9-8-61)

.....Leibert Garland Frey, 68, of Nashville, died there Sept. 3. Retired, he gave 18 years of service to Tennessee Baptists, as secretary of the missions department of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, as office secretary and manager of the business office, and as recording secretary of the Convention. (BP)

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Negroes Picket 3
Oklahoma Churches

(9-8-61)

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Negro demonstrators, carrying Bibles and signs, have picketed three churches in Oklahoma City, including First Baptist, claiming these to be "segregated churches."

Demonstrators were invited to worship in First Baptist Church but declined in favor of continuing their picketing. "We have no policy regarding Negroes at all," H. H. Hobbs, church pastor, said, "and in the 13 years I've been here, no Negro has ever even presented himself for membership."

Hobbs said he told this to Dr. Donald Yates, white physician and Disciples of Christ minister who led the demonstrators. He talked with Yates prior to the Sunday picketing.

The demonstrations were peaceful and without incident. About 15 young Negroes took part. The group went from church to church. Yates said they will go to different churches in Oklahoma City at least once a month.

Some observers noted the followers for these churchside demonstrations were "pitifully small" compared with the hundreds who took part in sit-ins at the city's restaurants earlier.

Hobbs said when the Negroes came to First Baptist Church more than a dozen members invited them inside but the demonstrators declined.

Hobbs continued, "Negroes attending our services wouldn't be anything new. They worship with us quite often and are received as worshippers just as others are received."

Concerning membership, Hobbs said, "I am quite sure the decision on the part of our congregation would depend on their motivation--and not on their color."

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