

## A Cuban Quaker in Exile

By MARGARETTA COPE CURTIN

AT a time when almost two thousand homeless Cubans were arriving every week in Miami, the American pastor of the Tenth Avenue Friends' Meeting was offered the directorship of Church World Service, the Protestant relocation agency. The American families in his Meeting were moving away, but because he was reluctant to leave the Cuban members, who needed him, he turned to his refugee helper, saying "I will accept if you are ready, Juan."

Juan Sierra was ready. He had been pastor of a Meeting of one hundred members in Cuba. Here he would serve only fifty of his countrymen, but the problems were formidable. In meeting, he could speak Spanish; outside was a strange country with a strange language.

But he had been endeavoring to prepare himself. In the three months since his arrival, in 1961, he had learned to drive around the city; he had studied the complicated rules and procedure of the government agencies for refugees in Miami and had acquainted himself with the regulations for their resettlement as followed by the four relocation offices: Catholic, nondenominational, Protestant, and Jewish. The most difficult task remained. Feeling that his English was not adequate, he attended night classes. Later, after he took over the Tenth Avenue Meeting's pastorate, he enrolled for the English Center's intensive courses. Two terms of three-and-a-half hours a day, five days a week, were grueling for a man long out of school.

His work is not only for Cuban Friends; his mission extends to all who are troubled, Catholic or Protestant. In the rush years before the blockade, he would meet planes from Havana and take refugees in his car to the old Tamiami Hotel, where the government housed them for their first twenty-four hours, then would drive them the next day to register in the Freedom Tower and would guide them through the perplexing hours of interrogation before taking them to "Welfare" for their first checks. Most difficult of all was to find housing in crowded Miami.

He has begged tomatoes from farmers and stale bread from bakeries; the allowance to refugees without work is not sufficient for the high rents of a resort city and the hunger of large families. Always there is need for clothing, in many sizes, for men, women, and children. Once they came with little, but now with only what they have on.

Margaretta Cope Curtin, a one-time Philadelphian who has spent much time in Cuba and now lives in Miami, has devoted herself for the last few years to work with Miami's many Cuban refugees.

Conditions change from year to year, but basic problems remain the same. It is still true, though the stream of refugees is but a trickle compared to those earlier times, that at any hour of the day or night Juan Sierra may receive a call for help from the bewildered new exiles who continue to flee Cuba in little fishing boats.

Fortunately, Juan is a resolute man. All his life he has shown determination. It was not easy, nor was it customary in his native land, for a youth born in a remote north-coast town like Banes to go to Havana, the capital, to put himself through the University. Juan was there six years, working while he studied engineering.

It was in Havana that he met Hortensia, who was preparing for a teaching career. In 1934 they were married; in 1936 they made a joint decision: to dedicate themselves to their Quaker faith.

Those were busy years. Four sons were born. Juan was pastor of Friends' Meetings and assistant principal or principal of Friends' schools in Banes, Gibara, and Puerto Padre in Oriente Province—that province which soon was to be remembered as the birthplace of Fidel Castro and the Revolution.

It had been in Oriente, also, that the Quakers first labored. In the early 1900's, a Friend named Martin, making a sea trip from Jamaica to Philadelphia, chanced to be talking with the captain while passing Cuba. Captain Baker remarked that his company, United Fruit, would like to have missionaries in the section of Oriente where it was soon to start operations, possibly because of the location there of the Nañigos, devotees of a quasi-religious cult allied to the voodoo circles of Haiti, or possibly because missionaries tend to uplift the populace in general. For whatever reason, there was donated to the Friends for mission work in Cuba, through or by Captain Baker, the \$2,000 which led to the coming of Emma Phillips to Gibara.

She was an unusually competent young woman who had been a missionary in Mexico and a teacher of Herbert Hoover. With her came Sylvester and May Jones, an American couple, and two young Mexican Friends, Francisco Martinez and Maria Trevino.

Midwestern Friends continued to sponsor the Meetings that sprang up. And it was in Banes, when he was between eighteen and twenty, that Juan had joined one of them. At Matanzas, less than a hundred miles from Havana, Friends studied at the seminary with the other Protestant denominations, who divided the country and worked harmoniously together. When Castro rose to power, no one dreamed he was other than he seemed, a

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to propose such support; he believes fervently that it is his authentic concern; but he "knows" (and perhaps others make haste to inform him) that it would be upsetting. And we must not have conflict in a Meeting! So what he does is to keep it to himself or to mumble about it with intimates. The great irony here is that such refusal to bring the "divisive" concern before the Meeting is precisely what *does* bring conflict into the Meeting—dead-end conflict, because it is unadmitted and unfaced. Such conflict, which is known to exist deep down, and which is not allowed to come to the surface, can incapacitate the group for any real action or progress, even though there may be surface "satisfaction" with a static list of property-keeping and charitable pursuits.

Equally damaging to the genuine health of the Meeting are situations in which a too-early agreement or a too-summary disagreement is reached on a concern that produces conflict. Strong members sometimes moralize and articulate an agreement while others in the Meeting are persuaded not to voice the anger or at least strong discomfort which this push toward unity makes them feel. Similarly, there is the situation where a conflict should have been fully admitted to and sat with, perhaps over a considerable period of time, yet is hastily swept under the rug as something on which Friends "cannot unite"; thus the full realities (and perhaps opportunities) of the conflict are never recognized. Harbored, unarticulated, it festers beneath the smiling surfaces—as in the case of a coerced unity.

This refusal to admit the reality and even the human value of anger also bears upon our philosophy of religion as it relates to social action. When we fail to admit our own anger we tend to suppress and to deny the importance of anger in political action for social justice.

For the first meeting of First-day School last fall, the children and adults in my Meeting met together to see and discuss a film called *The Magician*. This film, circulated widely by the American Friends Service Committee (and used extensively in the Mississippi Freedom Schools last summer) is a kind of Pied Piper allegory. In it a group of children playing on a beach are approached by a man in generalized military dress who begins to fascinate them with sleight-of-hand magic, then lures them to a shooting gallery where, after giving them paper soldier hats and toy machine guns, he sets them all to firing a real shooting-gallery machine gun at targets that graduate from toy animals (such as tigers) to much more humanized toy animals and, finally, to a little-girl doll, at which the children cannot bear to fire until the sign "enemy" is put above her. The bullets rip into the doll, and the children, receiving much drill instruction, march away with their military hats and toy guns, a grim lot.

Several of the adults who saw the film responded in

a way that seems to me fairly typical of Friends. One complained: "It made us hate the military instead of war." What bothered him was the film's admission of an emotion directed against a certain type of person—"the military." Possibly he would have preferred a more reasoned, less dramatic, exposition of the "causes of war"—famine, population explosion, and, in general, the conditions that the agencies of the United Nations are working to alleviate and that an ideal world government would seek to remove. Yet I would suggest that personification of the "enemy" as the military indoctrinators themselves is necessary as a threshold to understanding.

Before any rationality can be brought to the actual causes of war the military and people made agents of the military must be seen for what they are, and emotion—some sort of outcry—must be directed at them. The point here is not hatred; nor is it simply anger that short-circuits right back to the man who is "angry." Rather it is a personal, instinctive sense of exploitation and injustice. What is being done to these children, to me, to my children?! What, who, what forces, are making them into unwitting killers?! This is the feeling that must undergird analysis—must be fuel for the fire of peace-making. Not simply anger, then, but a more cool-headed (yet not cooled-off) "righteous indignation" becomes the feeling when admitted to and expressed.

Jesus whipping money-changers from the temple should not be totally bowdlerized from our New Testaments. Nor is indignation itself the end: the controlled and rational channeling of the anger, once admitted to, gets to be the point, together with cool analysis of causes and of how to act upon them. But "indignation" is the beginning.

For example, the "United States" (which is to say its military and military-thinking men who want to experiment with their new "harmless" anti-vegetation chemicals, their napalm bombs, and their untested destroyers and jets) must be branded clearly as an unjustified intervener in Vietnam, for the very facts of this situation cannot be perceived without such branding, and only if we perceive the facts can we envision realistic solutions. Similarly, no words about the need for peace and reconciliation in Mississippi "speak truth" unless at the same time they express our outrage at the exploitation, terror, and murder of Negroes there.

Thus the expression of anger is inseparable from that of love itself. And "charity for all"—the understanding that all are somehow "victims" and are forgiven—becomes possible only if we allow ourselves to distinguish between some as "victims" and some as "oppressors" in actual social situations. In questions of social action, as in relationships with individuals, we cannot afford to suppress or distort our inner power when it would speak.

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religious man who wore a Catholic medal around his neck on a gold chain.

The seizure of schools began in 1960, but it was not until May of '61 that Castro shocked everyone by appearing on television to announce that the revolutionary government would take over all private schools, religious or secular. Only the very poor attended the public schools of Cuba, which were universally primitive and ill-equipped; this was, therefore, a severe blow to freedom.

That was the year which was to change the life of Juan Sierra, who was then executive secretary of the Yearly Meeting at Holguin; Hortensia was teaching Spanish and Spanish literature in the high school. Their third son was then thirteen years old. In the school he attended the government introduced several Communist teachers, who required each pupil to answer the roll call with some appropriate slogan, such as "Down with the Yanquis!" One day, when the young Sierra's name was called, he said boldly, "God is love." Such defiance was dangerous. Proud though he was of their spirit, Juan was afraid for his sons, and wondered what he should do.

The decision was taken out of his hands. One night he heard two shots fired directly in front of his house. Three milicianos came with machine guns, asking the crowd that gathered, "Where did those shots come from?"

The crowd replied, "The shots came from here." Although they had arranged it all, the milicianos now made it appear that the Friends were guilty.

They demanded admittance. Juan protested, but had to let them in to search for the weapons the gentle pastor did not own. On this excuse, the school and the Meeting were taken over: buildings, bank account—everything was seized.

For a time, Juan led his students to a camp in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. But this was no solution. He decided he must confront the government; it was inconceivable that such things could happen in democratic Cuba.

That they *could* happen, two interviews with the minister of Education convinced him. Inasmuch as in both of them he said, "Now we have no religious liberty," it was small wonder that when he asked leave to take his family to Mexico to teach illiterates his request was refused.

Those were anxious days. The Sierras had no means of support; but worse, Joel, twenty-six, and Jorge, twenty-three, could be forced into the Milicia. Luckily, through friends in the United States, Juan managed to arrange their escape. There were two more months of waiting before Juan, Hortensia, Daniel, and David, with the help of a shipping-line official whom Juan knew personally, fled on a freighter and reached Florida.

Long before we met, I knew Juan's understanding

voice over the telephone. My first appeal to him concerned a student who had been a political prisoner. Because of Juan's visits and kindness and the aid of a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, this young man is no longer despondent and without hope of an education. He is attending Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and has joined the Society of Friends.



Juan and Hortensia Sierra

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Recently, when a Philadelphia Friend came to Miami, we accepted an invitation to visit the Sierras, finding our destination a modest one-story house with a sign in front reading, "Iglesia 'Los Amigos.'" The Meeting and the pastor's house are both under one roof. The Meeting is a room only ten by twenty feet in size, but there is space for fifty metal folding chairs, a piano, and a reading stand.

Hortensia, Juan's serenely beautiful wife, ushered us into a tiny office behind the meeting room; there she was caring for two black-eyed refugee boys of one-and-a-half and five while their mothers were at work. Once they had kept an eight-month-old baby; always there are visitors, she explained, until the families get settled.

Then Juan came in. He is one of those slender Cubans whose age it is impossible to guess; his worn, expressive face was transformed by a warm smile when he spoke of his people. Some of them had come to Miami before the Revolution. The heads of ten families, therefore, were able to become naturalized American citizens—a privi-

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lege denied to refugees, each of whom, like Juan himself, has a blue card and a number. Fifty of the blue-card families, Friends or "friends of Friends" who had attended meeting while in Miami, are now relocated in other parts of the country. Those who remain no longer receive relief; and like the pre-Castro Cubans they have humble jobs.

They plan to stay here, or at least to stay until conditions in their country are changed. Among them are several teachers, a certified public accountant, a bank manager, and an engineer who now paints automobiles. The other men work in shoe factories or make picture frames; the women who are able to find employment run power machines or are otherwise engaged in the fashion and clothing industry. None of them are prosperous; none follow their former professions.

The two Sierra sons who are still at home attend Dade Junior College at night. In order to do so, they must earn their way by working all day: one in a plant that makes aluminum paint, and the other cutting and delivering rugs. The two oldest sons have completed their education and are living in Kansas and Texas.

Juan and Hortensia showed us around the building: the kitchen, where Friends have lunch together once a month after meeting, with each family bringing food; the narrow hall, with tiny bedrooms branching out for the four Sierras and their frequent visitors. Everything is immaculately clean, sparsely furnished, and on a scale unbelievably small.

The following Sunday I went to meeting for worship at Tenth Avenue in the company of another Friend, a former Philadelphian now living in Miami. It was moving to see so many brave people who had lost everything gathered together for worship.

As he walked with us afterward to our car, Juan told us about the organization called Cuban Protestants in Exile, of which he formerly had served as president for two years. Until recently, he told us, the Cuban Friends in Miami have been supported by the Five Years Meeting, aided by North Carolina Yearly Meeting. Now they must take on more of the financial burden themselves. The members of the Meeting are few in number and are barely able to gain a livelihood, but, with the same faith that has sustained Juan through all his tribulations, he looks to the future. Somehow, he believes, the Tenth Avenue Meeting will find a way.

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## **Seven Senecas in England**

By HENRY J. CADBURY

EDWIN BRONNER'S article in the January 1 FRIENDS JOURNAL brings together two matters of very topical contemporary interest. One is modern curiosity about the history and languages of the emerging African peoples. The other is the Seneca Indians of Western New York, for whom Philadelphia Friends have felt keen concern since the 1790's and particularly in the last year or two because of the action of the United States Government in dispossessing them of land guaranteed to them by treaty. (The non-Quaker public feels interest in them, too, as was shown a few weeks ago when an anonymous manuscript journal of a Quaker visitor to them in 1798 was sold at auction for \$800.) The link in the article between the aborigines of two continents is, of course, that remarkable Quaker woman of Sheffield, England, Hannah Kilham. In both contexts her significance is her pioneer effort in the translating and reducing to writing of native languages.

Her work on the Seneca language (1818) is the earlier and the less known. Edwin Bronner reports on a letter that she wrote in 1821, telling how she had met a group of Seneca Indians in England. One cannot but ask how Seneca Indians came to be in England, and how they became known to Friends there.

On the very same day that I read "Hannah Kilham, Rediscovered" in the FRIENDS JOURNAL I stumbled by chance upon the answers to these questions—a case of coincidence and of serendipity. There was no Friends' periodical in Hannah Kilham's day (1774-1832), or at least nothing except a slender annual necrology of ministers and elders deceased, called the *Annual Monitor and Memorandum Book*, published at York annually, beginning in 1813. It has, besides the obituaries, blank pages for memoranda and a few miscellaneous articles. By good chance I came upon two of these articles (No. 7 for 1819 and No. 8 for 1820) which give a pretty full contemporary account of Seneca Indians in England in 1818. It begins as follows: "About the close of the year 1817, two Americans, with a view to pecuniary advantage, succeeded not without some difficulty, at a council held with the Seneca Indians resident on Buffalo Creek, in procuring seven men of that nation, one of whom was a chief, for a stipulated sum to cross the Atlantic and for twelve months, to exhibit their warlike customs, their manners of life, etc. in this country."

Then follows the Indian name, the English name, and the age of each of the seven. The chief was Senungice or Long Horns, aged 41. They were accompanied by an interpreter, Augustus C. Fox, who had been a trader amongst the Indians for upwards of twelve years. Their