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Operation Pedro Pan in FIU Library Collections

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Operation Pedro Pan in FIU Library Collections

Rita M. Cauce, FIU Libraries

Ninth Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American
Studies, May 23, 2013

Cuban Research Institute



Operation Pedro Pan

Dec. 1960 – Oct. 1962

The exodus of approx.
14,000 unaccompanied
Cuban Children to the
United States

The New York Times, March 9, 1963
Ruby Hart Phillips

14,072 CHILDREN SENT OUT OF CUBA: Parents Do
By R. HART PHILLIPS Special to The New York Times.
New York Times (1923-Current file); Mar 9, 1963:
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009)
pg. 2

14,072 CHILDREN SENT OUT OF CUBA

Parents Don't Want Them to
Be Communist Indoctrinated

By R. HART PHILLIPS

Special to The New York Times.

MIAMI, Fla., March 6 —

The number of Cuban children arriving in Miami, unaccompanied by parents, as refugees from the Castro regime reached a total of 14,072 on Feb. 11.

Parents in Cuba have been sending their children to Miami since Dec. of 1960. These parents would rather entrust the children to relatives, friends or strangers in the United States

1960 - Cuban Refugees Flood Miami

INFORME PROVISIONAL
PARA EL
PRESIDENTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS
SOBRE EL PROBLEMA
DE LOS REFUGIADOS CUBANOS

POR
TRACY S. VOORHEES

19 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1960

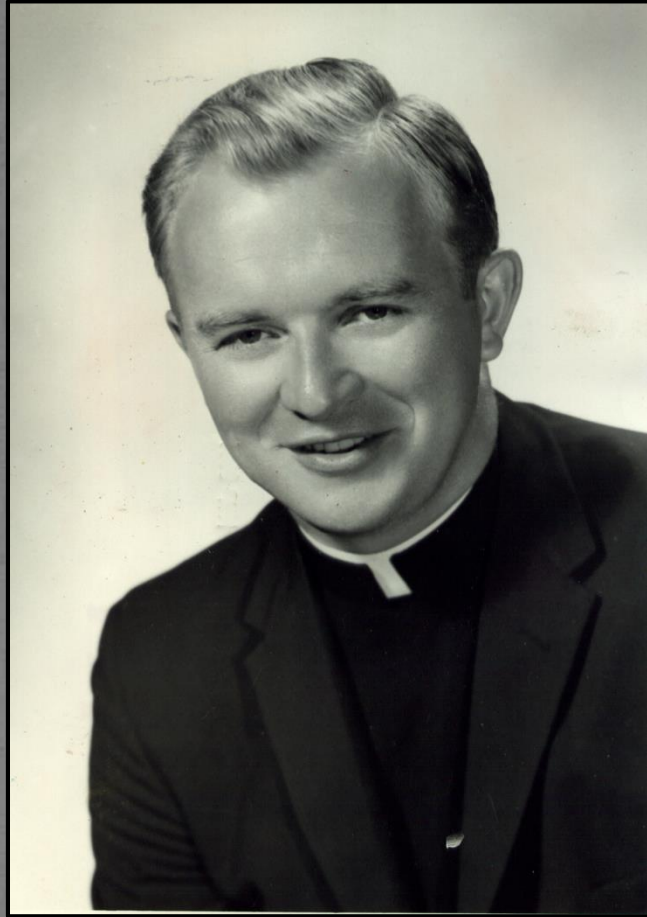
Over 1,000 Cuban Refugees
arrive weekly

Recientemente, la afluencia de viajeros ha ido creciendo hasta sobrepasar la cifra aproximada de 1.000 por semana, la cual se sostuvo durante muchos meses. Casi todos ellos entran por Miami, y la mayoría se quedo allí.

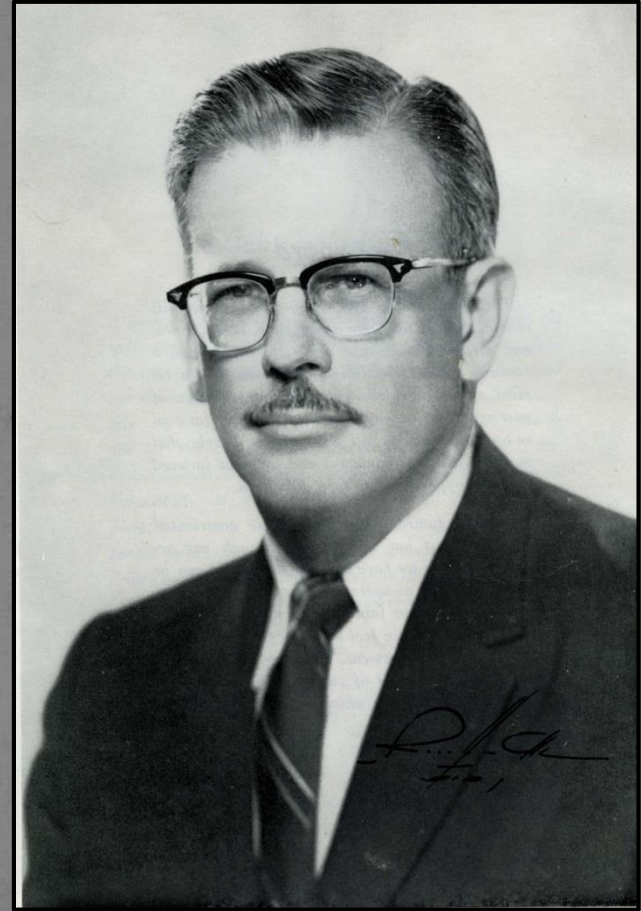
Problemas con que se enfrentan estos refugiados

La extremada limitación impuesta por el actual Gobierno cubano, en virtud de la cual ninguna de estas personas puede salir llevando consigo más de \$5.00 en dinero norteamericano, ha sido causa de inmediatas penalidades en muchísimos casos.

Beginnings of Operation Pedro Pan and The Cuban Children's Program



Father (later Monsignor) Bryan O. Walsh,
Director Catholic Welfare Bureau, Miami



James Baker, Headmaster,
Ruston Academy, Havana

Operation Pedro Pan Children Arrive



All Photos Courtesy of Barry University Archives

1960-1961 Cuba

1960 – One year after the revolution in Cuba:

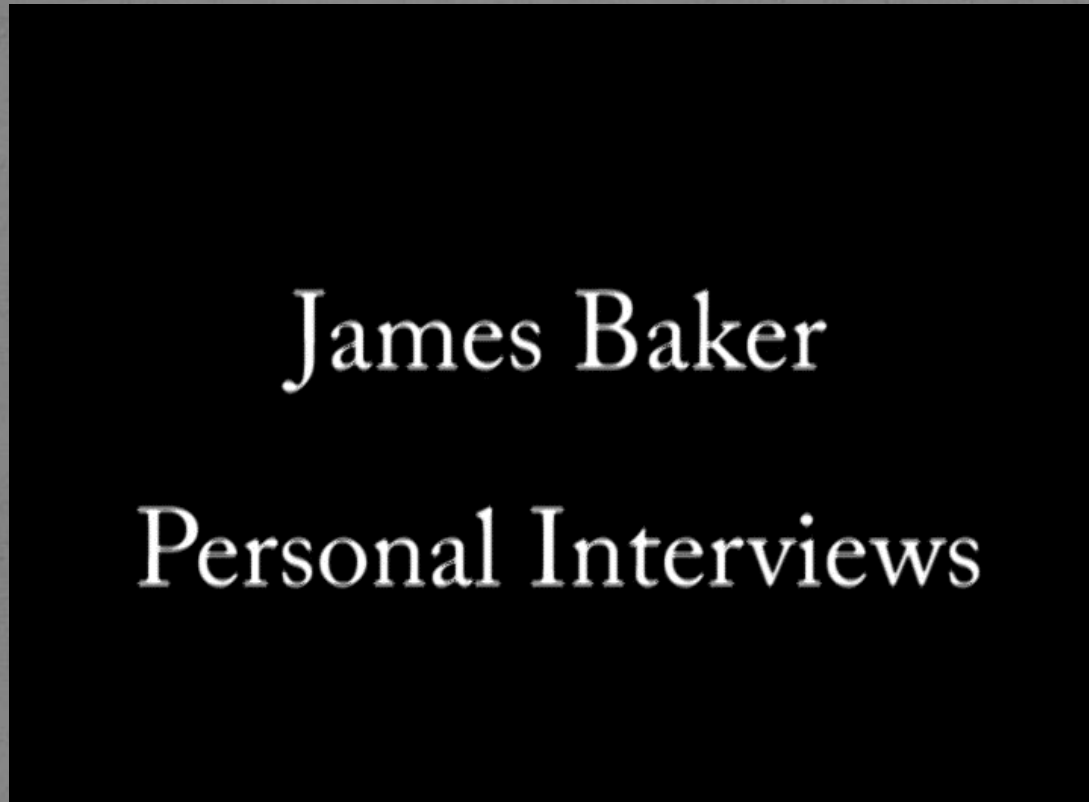
- Castro has already established relations with the Soviet Union
- National and foreign businesses were nationalized
- Hundreds executed – “el paredón” (firing squads)
- Comité de Defensa de la Revolución – neighborhood committees “eyes and ears” of the revolution
- Revolutionary youth groups in full swing for all ages

1961 – The Year of Education

- Schools closed to re-write curriculum; meanwhile youth sent to countryside to work for the revolution

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Short clip from the collection's personal interviews:
(click image to view/ <https://vimeo.com/158049945>)



At the Height of the Cold War

- Parents overall fear of communist indoctrination
- Parents saw separation from their child as very short term – situation in Cuba would be settled soon.
- Communist regime could not exist 90 miles from U.S. territory!

Operation Pedro Pan in FIU Library Collections

Short take from the collection's personal interviews:
(click image to view/ <https://vimeo.com/158051460>)

Monsignor
Bryan O. Walsh

Personal Interviews

CATHOLIC WELFARE BUREAU
DIOCESE OF MIAMI

REV. FATHER BRYAN O. WALSH, S.T.L.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REV. JOHN J. NEVINS
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
REGIONAL OFFICES
MIAMI PORT LAUDERDALE

395 N. W. FIRST STREET -- SUITE 207
MIAMI 36, FLORIDA
FRANKLIN 9-2893

Fecha _____

A QUIEN PUEDA INTERESAR:

Se hace constar que:

a _____

nacio _____

le ha sido concedida la "Visa Waiver" por el Departamento de Estado a petición del Catholic Welfare Bureau, Inc.

Pan American y K. L. M. Royal Dutch Airlines han sido notificadas. El solicitante deberá dirigirse a dichas oficinas para hacer la reservación y comprar su pasaje.

(Rev. Fr.) Bryan O. Walsh
Director



MEMBER OF THE UNITED FUND OF DADE COUNTY
MEMBER OF THE UNITED FUND OF BROWARD COUNTY

Visa Waivers

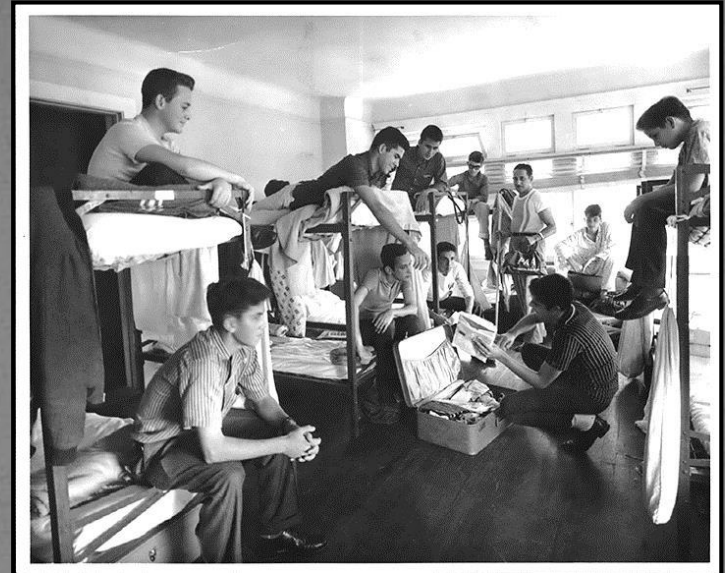
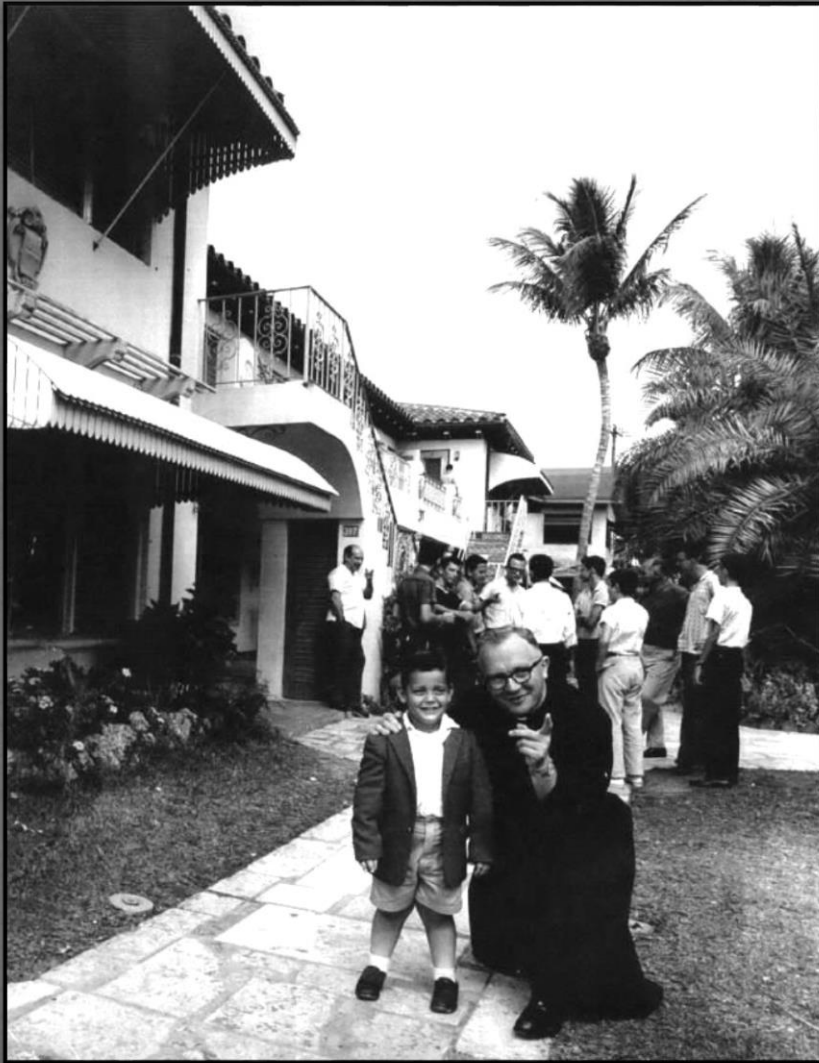
- Distributed by clandestine network across all provinces of Cuba.
- Included British commercial attaché and wives of ambassadors not subject to searches on leaving or entering the country.
- Many involved were arrested and served long prison terms.

Pedro Pan Shelters in Miami Area



Photos Courtesy of Barry University Archives

Pedro Pan Children at Different Shelters in Miami Area



Photos Courtesy of Barry University Archives

FIU Libraries' Operation Pedro Pan Research Guide: Quick Overview

libguides.fiu.edu/PedroPan

Operation Pedro Pan Resources

The exodus of 14,000 children from Cuba to the U.S.: December 1960 - October 1962

Last Updated: May 23, 2013 | URL: <http://libguides.fiu.edu/PedroPan> | [Print Guide](#)

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Welcome



[Comments \(0\)](#)

Operation Pedro Pan Resources

Welcome to FIU Libraries' guide to Operation Pedro Pan resources!

This guide provides a selective collection of FIU resources under the first pages: "Oral Histories", "Books" and "Articles". On the "Other Resources" page you will find links to Operation Pedro Pan information outside of FIU. This guide is still under construction so feel free to contact me with any questions.

[Comments \(0\)](#)

Operation Pedro Pan: Dec. 1960 - Oct. 1962

14,000 Children Flee Castro's Cuba: The Largest Exodus of Unaccompanied Minors in the Western Hemisphere

In 1960, many Cuban parents had to face the unimaginable decision of sending their unaccompanied children to a foreign country, "in order to escape Communist indoctrination – in some cases to avoid being sent to Russia or one of the Soviet satellite countries for such indoctrination" (Thomas 1963). It was one year after the revolution in Cuba and already Catholic schools and churches were closed, foreign-owned companies were confiscated, and many industries nationalized. The fact that the revolution saw the role of the Cuban youth as crucial for a successful revolution was clear with the formation of youth groups like the Asociación de Jóvenes Rebeldes (Association of Youth Rebels), formed to engage children of all ages in communist ideology. Parents who did not support their child's membership in these groups were considered anti-revolutionary and would face the consequences. On sending their child away, the parents saw the separation as temporary, thinking the situation in Cuba would be settled soon and the child would be able to return to Cuba. Even though it was still a rumor that Castro would abolish Patria Potestad, the legal rights of parents over their children, in some sense, he already had: the government had taken over the control of many aspects of a child's formation.

Father Bryan O. Walsh (later Monsignor Walsh), Director of Catholic Welfare Bureau in Miami, strongly advocated for federal funds to aid in the care of unaccompanied Cuban children. Once these funds were secured, he launched the "Cuban Children's Program" in 1960 as a separate division of the Catholic Welfare Bureau to manage the care of unaccompanied Cuban refugee children who found themselves already in Miami, without parents or relatives to care for them (Walsh 1971). In December 1960 Father Walsh was approached by Mr. James Baker, headmaster of an American school in Havana, and was asked to assist in providing shelter and education for Cuban children who would be sent to Miami. So began Operation Pedro Pan. What was originally seen as a group of students flying out of Cuba, soon turned into the largest exodus of unaccompanied children in the Western hemisphere.

Subject Guide

Rita M. Cauce

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Oral Histories

FIU Libraries Special Collections holds many personal interviews with prominent Operation Pedro Pan figures.

The most significant of these are part of the [Cuban Living History Project Collection](#), interviews conducted by Miguel González Pando between 1990 and 1998. Many Pedro Pan children and others involved in Operation Pedro Pan were interviewed for this project, including the founders, Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh and James Baker.

Other Pedro Pan oral histories held by FIU Libraries are the interviews created by Eloisa Echazábal and Carmen Romaniach between 2009 and 2011. Eloisa and Carmen are both 'Pedro Pans'.

[CLICK HERE](#) for list of these interviews in the FIU Libraries catalog

FIU is in the process of digitizing these oral histories in hopes of making them available through online streaming – so stay tuned!

Pedro Pan Interviews in the Cuban Living History Project

Interviews by Miguel González Pando

VHS copies of these interviews may be viewed in Special Collections with prior appointment.

List of Interviewees in this collections:

- Azán Chaviano, Alex, 1997.
- Baker, James, 1997.
- Cardona, Joe, 1998.
- Castillo, Claudio, 1998.
- Cepero, Eloy, 1997.
- Chao, Olga Nodarse, 1997.
- Chirino, Willy and Lissette, 1997.
- Chovel, Elisa (Elly), 1997.
- Conde, Yvonne, 1998. (no VHS copy)
- Figueredo, Fernando, 1997.

Operation Pedro Pan in FIU Library Collections

Links to complete interviews online:

- Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh

[http://libtube.fiu.edu/Browse/Tag/Walsh Bryan O -- Interviews](http://libtube.fiu.edu/Browse/Tag/Walsh%20Bryan%20O%20--%20Interviews)

- James Baker

[http://libtube.fiu.edu/Browse/Tag/Baker James -- Interviews](http://libtube.fiu.edu/Browse/Tag/Baker%20James%20--%20Interviews)

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