

New York sheriff busts 'liberated' church

Church was being used for day care, school, food line

NEW YORK (LNS) — The barricaded, barred and chained door of People's Church gave way to police hammering and chiseling at 7:15 am Jan. 7, and the Young Lords' 10-day occupation of the church, previously called First Spanish Methodist, in El Barrio (Spanish Harlem) was over — temporarily.

The Young Lords Organization, a Puerto Rican street gang, took control of the church Dec. 28. The takeover was the final strategy of a six-week struggle with the church's board of directors and its minister, an anti-Castro Cuban named Humberto Carrazana, to get them to provide space for a breakfast program, daycare centre, and liberation school for the children of El Barrio. Carrazana and the board persistently refused to let the Lords use the empty church.

Significantly, most of the members of the congregation are Cubans who come to El Barrio on Sunday from more affluent neighborhoods; they couldn't care less about the Puerto Ricans. When New York Lords chairman Felipe Luciano spoke to the congregation during Sunday services on Dec. 7 asking for space in the church, Carrazana called the police, who broke into the church, beat the Lords and their supporters, arrested 13 and sent eight to the hospital.

The bust last week was peaceful, as the Lords had promised, for their side, that it would be.

Sherriff William Kehl and eight of his unarmed deputies entered the church and told the 103 black, brown and white people inside that they were under arrest. "For serving the people, you're under

arrest.", "Long Live People's Church!", "Power to the People!" — these chants rang out as the people filed out into the bitterly cold morning air.

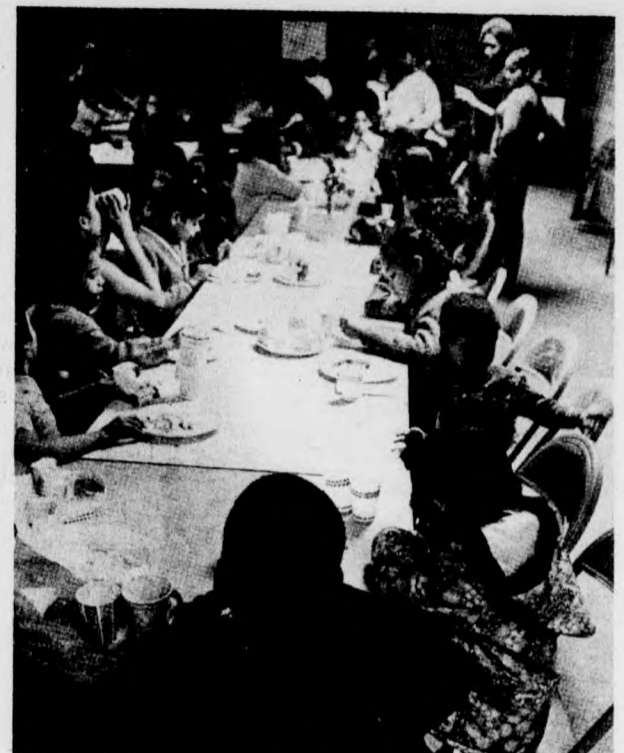
Five hundred police surrounded the church, blocking all access, and turning El Barrio into an armed camp.

Paddy wagons carried the people off to court where they were charged with civil contempt of a court injunction served Jan. 2 ordering them off the premises of First Spanish Methodist Church. Judge Saul Streit released the 103 on their own recognizance, stipulating that they agree not to reoccupy the church before the Jan. 26 hearing of the case.

Kehl, an officer of the court, had been so impressed by the Lords' repeated assertions that they did not want a violent confrontation with the police that he insisted that his deputies make the arrests.

It was a busy week for the sherriff. Forty supporters of the Lords, mostly white college students and drop-outs, staged a solidarity occupation of the Interchurch Centre on Riverside Drive on the morning of Jan. 5. They took over the 14th floor offices of Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke, head of the Methodist Board of Missions, and the 19th floor office of another Methodist official, Henry Whyman, to demonstrate that the real control of First Spanish Methodist lies outside El Barrio.

About 85 more supporters joined them within an hour and a half of their arrival. Methodist business was interrupted that day as the people took over a printing press to print leaflets demanding that the Lords be allowed to continue using



IT WAS GREAT WHILE IT LASTED

LNS -- David Fenton, Richard Balagur

New York police remove the door to the First Spanish Methodist Church (left), 10 days after the building was taken over by the Puerto Rican Young Lords to use as a People's Church. 103 people inside were charged with contempt of a court injunction which had ordered them to get out. The church space was being used for a breakfast program (right), day care centre and a liberation school.

People's Church and that the police be withdrawn from the black and brown community.

The Lords' supporters stayed all night and refused to let the Methodists use the 14th floor the next day. The sherriff attempted to serve an injunction ordering them out, but he also was not allowed to enter.

The people spent Tuesday leaf-letting the building and left early Wednesday morning when they heard the Lords bust was imminent.

First Spanish Methodist Church has not seen the last of the Young Lords.

The Lords plan to continue their struggle until their demands for a breakfast program, daycare centre and liberation school for the children of El Barrio are met. They are calling for the whole poor community and its supporters to go to the church for Sunday worship. They will not reduce the pressure on the church's minister, and his middle-class congregation until People's Church goes back to the people.

World Briefs

Alcatraz Indians still there

ALCATRAZ ISLAND, Calif. (LNS) — The Indians who reclaimed the abandoned prison island of Alcatraz a couple of months ago have not yet faced a serious attempt to evict them. But somebody's been giving them a hard time. A cable hooked to the foghorns on the island is said to have broken. Whether or not it's true, the foghorns are now blasting continuously four times a minute, for three seconds each blast. The men who run the thing say they can't shut off the horns until the cables are repaired because if a heavy fog rolls into San Francisco Bay, they wouldn't be able to get them going again. But the Indians are standing firm. When Christmas came, sentiment in the Bay area was so strong that the turkeys, trees, and toys donated by nearby residents outdid what the vast majority of Indians usually receive, in or out of reservations.

Ethiopian students killed

ADDIS ABABA (Guardian) — Three Ethiopian students were killed and five wounded Dec. 29 in a gun battle with riot police on the campus of Haile Selassie University here. The shooting began when police forced their way onto the campus to recover the body of student leader Kilahun Gizaw, shot Dec. 28. The police say they "were forced to reply with fire in the exchange of fire from among the students. . . ." Students had taken Gizaw's body from the hospital and charged that the government was responsible for his murder.

Indian guerrillas mobilize

NEW DELHI (Guardian) — More than 100 small guerrilla detachments in the Srikakulam Mountains in India have set up peoples' courts against landlords. The guerrillas have executed 25 landlords, distributed the property of 23, and since last spring, have fought 65 battles with police, ambushing them on 17 occasions. On Dec. 10, after the government had sent 3,500 armed special police into the guerrilla area, the Statesman of India reported "the presence of this massive force (police) has accomplished nothing."

Radical views-- fruitful talk

The following is a letter to the editor of Guardian, a radical newsweekly published in New York. "I assigned your recent Song My article to my principles of sociology class and required a paper based on it and several other articles. The Guardian article certainly stimulated a great deal of interest and discussion." The letter is signed, Roger K. Reed, Indiana Central College, Indianapolis, Ind.

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DON'T MISS THIS ONE

Next Tuesday (Jan. 20) at 8:30 p.m. in Burton Auditorium, Henry Popkin, North American drama critic for the Times of London, will be lecturing on "THE NEW THEATRE OF EUROPE". Mr. Popkin will be arriving in Toronto directly from extended visits to Warsaw, Prague, Berlin, Moscow, Paris and London, where he saw new works by Ionesco, Weiss and others. We're sure his lecture will be one of the high points of the 1969-70 theatre lecture series.

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