

the situation, I was asked to present my views and I was rudely interrupted and had to walk out of the meeting. I was trying to say that there existed a very real situation which required immediate attention. Also that I believed in dialogue and that I recommended that talks with this group should be encouraged with the view of looking into the program that they were suggesting to see if the church could involve them in projects for the community. At this moment I was interrupted and accused of being a communist. I walked away. The police were outside, probably ready to arrest someone.

On Sunday, the unexpected, by the minister and the congregation who had not been willing to listen, took place. The Young Lords were back attending the morning service, as they had done for seven consecutive Sundays. At the close of the service one of them stood and asked permission to address the congregation. Denied permission they took over the building. After simple negotiations they allowed those who wanted to leave the building, mostly members of the congregation, to do so.

HOW IT STARTED:

Seven weeks ago the organization wrote a letter to the head of the church organization asking the following:

1. Space for a hot breakfast program for children of the community. The Young Lords would provide everything. All they asked for was space during week days when the building was closed and not in usage.
2. Space for a day care center to be established for the people of the community.
3. A liberation school where they would teach special courses according to their philosophy. They did not ask for money.

This letter was ignored. Never answered. The only answer given by the minister and by the president of the Board of Directors was "No." No explanation to it.

At this juncture the group started attending services on Sundays and asking for the opportunity to explain the program to the congregation. Not allowed to do this they attended coffee hours after services, distributed leaflets, engaged the minister and members of the congregation in conversation, but to no avail. Everything was negative.

They persisted in visiting services on Sundays. On December 7, they attended service not expecting difficulty. This was supposed to be testimonial Sunday when people present were allowed to speak during the service. Mr. Luciano tried to speak and was stopped abruptly. To their surprise there were both uniformed cops and plainclothesmen from the police department in the congregation this Sunday. A detachment of additional cops showed up inside the church and started swinging on all sides. It resulted in a riot where eight people were hurt (some were hospitalized), 13 were arrested, five of them women. One girl had 21 stitches taken.

Felipe Luciano had an arm broken and eight stitches. Some were taken to hospitals for treatment and then to jail "tombs" waiting for a hearing which took place around midnight.

The minister had sought legal help while the accused had not had a chance to do so. Charges were filed against them on inciting to riot, criminal trespass and assault.

Cops continued harassment upon members of the organization during the week. Two among these cops are Puerto Ricans. A young man, Ramon, was assaulted by the cops

out in the street. When his brother tried to come to his help, he was also attacked. Police tried several times to force the doors of the office of the organization. They went to the place where Mrs. Luciano works asking for information. The former charges were lowered to misdemeanors after certain developments. Those arrested were freed on bail provided by themselves.

Sunday, December 21, back in the service at eleven. This time they had with them a lawyer, a doctor, newspaper people and a number of community people. Around 250 people, all together. In the congregation this Sunday were ministers and other representatives from other churches. While the church had agreed to have an answer ready for this Sunday, no such answer was given. They said they would not even meet to discuss the situation at all. At this the youth of the church became infuriated and started to express themselves. Negotiations with the Board had produced no positive answer. The youth of the church were arrested in support for the program of the Young Lords.

At the close of the service this time the group expected the minister and members of the Board at least to stay and talk to them. Instead, they all left.

Monday, December 22, the ministers met at the church. In the introduction to this report there is an explanation of what took place. The group of ministers present at that particular meeting were radicals not willing to talk on anybody else's terms but their own.

Sunday, December 28.

The day of the takeover. The New York Times, as well as the "El Dario La Prensa" on their Monday editions have [a] complete report on this. Also t.v. and radio. Members of the church were allowed to leave the building. Around 100 youth belonging to the Young Lords Organization are occupying the building. Entrances have been nailed from the inside. The church is trying to get an injunction. Other people chanted hymns outside. This time the police did not enter the building nor take any drastic action. They were around the building. Again the leaders of the church were approached but were negative, as always.

The Young Lords is a volunteer organization. It has no funds. There are no salaries paid to anybody. The Lawyer's Guild of New York is providing legal help. Who are the leaders of the New York chapter?

Chairman—Mr. Felipe Luciano

Minister of Information—Mr. Pablo Guzman (Yoruba)

Minister of Health and Education—Mr. Juan Gonzalez

Minister of Defense—Mr. David Perez

Minister of Finance—Mr. Juan Ortiz (Fi)

The above report was given to me voluntarily and without reservations. I had no difficulty in entering the office neither in contacting the leaders who were there. I identified myself and made myself available for whatever they thought I could do to help. I was treated with courtesy and respect, all the contrary to what I received from the ministers. I was told that all they wanted at the moment was space for their proposed breakfast program. The other demands would be discussed later on. They are still ready for talks with anybody who may show interest in helping solve the situation.

Pablo Cottó

December 29, 1969