



REVOLT IN HAVANA; 50 SLAIN

BATISTA FORCES CRUSH ATTACK ON HIS PALACE



GEN. BATISTA

President Blames Assault on 'Pro-Reds'

BY JULES DUBOIS
(Picture on back page)
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

HAVANA, Cuba, March 13 — Gen. Fulgencio Batista remained the strong man of Cuba tonight after loyal troops crushed a suicidal attack against the presidential palace.



Korenda

The death toll is expected to exceed at least 50. Thirty four dead were officially reported in the morgue. The army said it would release its casualty figures tonight.

The number of wounded is unknown except that 12 were caught by gunfire that peppered a bus which was forced to halt in front of the palace. They were taken to the hospital, several in critical condition.

Caught Off Guard

Batista confirmed that the attackers penetrated the palace when they caught the guard in a lax moment.

He bitterly denounced his opponents and blamed "pro communists" for the attack. He charged they were financed by "miserable" persons.

Reports from eyewitnesses indicate that the attackers numbered 40. Others took up positions at nearby rooftops.

One American, Peter Korenda of Clifton, N. J., was killed when he stuck his head out of his room in the Parkview hotel near the palace.

Partisans of Socarras

The attackers comprised partisans of ex-President Carlos Prio Socarras who was overthrown by Batista five years ago. Also participating were sympathizers of Fidel Castro, rebel leader who is holed up in Sierra Maestra in Oriente province.

Menelao Mora, one of Prio's trusted lieutenants, was killed inside the palace. Jose Antonio Echevarria, president of the student federation, was killed as he tried to flee to the sanctuary of the university after participating in a raid against a radio station.

Batista was having luncheon in his apartment on the top floor of the palace with two cabinet ministers. His wife was in the bedroom nursing their young son, Fulgencio, who was ill. She is expecting another baby soon.

Radio censorship was imposed tonight. Only official bulletins issued by the army command may be broadcast.

TV Station Blacked Out

One TV station Telemundo was suspended from broadcasting news for 72 hours because it filmed today's events. Station officials said they had no prior word that this was prohibited.

Stern repressive measures were taken by the police tonight as Havana's streets became deserted. Cars were halted and occupants searched while wholesale arrests were made.

Several dead were reported by the police radio who have been "found" with unexploded hand grenades on

their belts. They were not identified.

The president gave this version:

About 40 men took positions around the palace and attacked in unison. The presidential guard responded immediately. Police and army and navy forces joined in a mopup operation. Tanks lined up in front of the palace and extended a block in each direction.

8 Shoot a Sergeant

The main inside attack was by eight men, Batista said. As he told it:

The eight shot a sergeant, a colonel and a private on guard and forced their way in thru the south palace door.

When they reached the first floor, four ran westward and four others to the east where Batista's offices are.

They knocked at some of the doors, threatening to force them open, then threw three hand grenades. One exploded.

Batista later went to his private office and directed the palace defense from there.

"All I did was to use the telephone and give orders to my aides," Batista said, "alho my loaded .45 was very near my hand."

Tells of Tipoff

Batista said he had been informed earlier that an attack on the palace was planned and had instructed the guards and the army to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Batista wore a sports jacket. Asked why he did not wear the leather jacket he customarily wears on "revolutionary" occasions, he replied, "This time I wore something softer."

Other sources said a guard on the street floor of the palace managed to touch the alarm bell which gave the signal that an attack was under way. The rebels were met with machinegun fire from Batista's bodyguards, who picked them off from a third floor balcony.

Twenty bodies of the slain were found afterward in the palace.

When I interviewed Batista in his office last week it was guarded only by two secret service men and a squad of soldiers downstairs at the palace gate.

10 to 15 Escape

Snipers who had entrenched themselves in nearby buildings, especially the new Palace of Fine Arts, were wiped out during the battle or fled.

Ten or 15 of the palace attackers were reported to have shot their way to safety after companions were killed.

Tanks and troops were rushed to the palace from Camp Columbia, eight miles outside the capital.

It was 2:30 p. m. [Chicago time] when buses and cars converged on the palace plaza and disgorged the rebels. Each carried a weapon. One group rushed directly in to assault the palace.

Another rebel group seized Reloj, a commercial radio station, and forced an announcer at gunpoint to broadcast that the army had rebelled and thrown out its commander, Gen. Francisco Tabernilla, and that Batista was dead.

Authorities quickly recaptured the radio station, however, and the reports were retracted.

Last fall, Echevarria flew to

Mexico where he conferred with Castro and signed a pact in which he promised the support of university students to a plan by Castro to invade Cuba and overthrow Batista. Today's fighting resulted from that pact.

The young men who took part in the revolt are mostly sons of families who resented Batista's seizure of power in 1952 and who believe his election to the presidency in 1954 was rigged. Many Cubans are openly bitter about what they call the president's military dictatorship and they call his army supporters corrupt.

I reached the no man's land around the palace as the fighting began to subside.

Arms at University

Police occupied the University of Havana, which has been closed for months, and reported they had seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition including grenades.

At dusk two tanks and an

infantry regiment were dispatched to the Calixto Garcia hospital where survivors of the attack on the palace were reported to have entrenched themselves. The hospital is near the university.

All airplane flights into and from Havana were halted shortly after the fighting erupted. [Pan American airways said in Miami it hoped to resume flights today. It normally makes 12 Havana flights daily.]

The army also commanded all aviation gasoline in case it should be needed for military air craft.

At 6 p. m., police clamped a curfew on Havana and allowed no one without a permit on the streets.

The revolt did not come as a surprise. The rebel element supporting Castro had been predicting it for a week.