

Air Pouch

RESTRICTED

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

PRIORITY

(Security Classification)

737.00/5-2753

XR 837.43

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMEMBASSY, HABANA

MAY 27 1953

1843

DCSP. NO.

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

May 27, 1953

DATE

REF D-1556, April 6, 1953

24 For Dept. Use Only hm	ACTION	DEPT.					
	ARA REC'D MAY 28	IN FO O	OLI	IBS	IFI	IPS	SY

SUBJECT: VERDICT IN EASTER SUNDAY CONSPIRACY TRIAL AND TROUBLE-CHARGED STUDENT REACTION

On May 21, 1953, the Urgency Court of Habana rendered its verdict in the case of the persons arrested on Easter Sunday on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the Government. Out of seventy-odd defendants, the public prosecutor had requested prison sentences for only 14, having recommended dismissal of charges against the balance for lack of evidence. The court sentenced Rafael GARCIA Bârcena, the alleged ringleader of the plot, to two years' imprisonment; three persons to one year in jail; one other (the woman in whose apartment Garcia Bârcena and others were accused of congregating) to six months' imprisonment; and eight others to three months in jail. One person was acquitted. Defense attorneys immediately announced that the verdict would be appealed on the ground of unconstitutionality.

While criticism of the court's verdict was not lacking from several opposition sources, the reaction that snowballed into potentially serious proportions was that of the University students. It began when students of the medical school attacked the verdict over loudspeakers from the grounds of their school. It appears that a passing police car was stoned by the students and the police retaliated with shots; no one was hurt and the students retreated into their school. While this incident passed without further complications, the University Student Federation (FEU) announced for May 25 and 26 a 48-hour strike in protest against the Garcia Bârcena and other convictions.

The governing Council of the University decreed that scholastic activities would continue on the 25th and 26th despite the FEU-called strike, that the absence of students would not prevent scheduled classes, examinations, etc. from being considered as held, and that the current course of studies would be cancelled if not completed within the time established for it. The FEU retorted with a manifesto attacking the attitude of the Council, reaffirming its strike call, announcing its decision to take

FCFornes, Jr.:ep

REPORTER

RESTRICTED

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

This Document Must Be Returned 737.00/5-2753

FILED  
MAY 27 1953

HH

RESTRICTED

(Classification)

possession of the thirteen schools of the University during the strike, and calling a student mass meeting for the morning of the 25th.

The mass meeting called by the FEU was duly held inside the University grounds, apparently with a majority of the students opposing the strike, but was reportedly broken up by shots. A student and another man apparently not a student were found by University police in possession of arms. A second and smaller meeting was subsequently held which ratified the FEU decision to strike.

The University Council suspended the President and other officers of the FEU pending proceedings against them, presumably with a view to expulsion from the University, and ordered that the persons found in possession of arms within the University be turned over to the Urgency Court for appropriate disposition. The Council charged that the FEU strike was being carried out without consulting and against the will of the student body.

The Communists attacked the court verdict in the García Bárcena case from the point of view that it was manifestly unjust for those who had been successful in overthrowing a lawful government to condemn those who emulated them but were not successful. They attacked the University Council for its "repression of student activities in favor of Cuban freedom" and compared it with the Council that "supported the Machado government."

#### Comment

The events of the last few days seem to have brought about an open break between the University governing authorities and the FEU. They appear to confirm previous indications that the FEU has been operating without support of the majority of the student body, and hence, without constructive purpose. The present difference between the University Council and the FEU has gone farther than any previous one, such as that over the May First student-worker celebration in the University Stadium. It contains the distinct threat, very disturbing to many students, that the current study course may be cancelled and the University closed. Likewise, the possibility of expulsion of its leaders from the University may provide the FEU with added opportunity for agitation and bringing pressure to bear on the Council, often accused of lack of resolution, to desist from interfering with FEU political activities. So long as a situation such as the present remains an internal University problem,

RESTRICTED

Page 3 of \_\_\_\_\_  
Disp. No. 1843  
From Habana

RESTRICTED

(Classification)

Page \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
Encl. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Disp. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
From \_\_\_\_\_

it appears unlikely that the Government will make any move to interfere.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain  
Acting Counselor of Embassy

RESTRICTED