

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMEMBASSY, HABANA

1100

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

January 16, 1953

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SUBJECT: Student Riots Quelled by Police and Firemen

University of Habana students started rioting on the morning of January 15, 1953 after they discovered that a campus statue of Julio Antonio MELLA had been defaced with red paint. Mella was a University of Habana student leader killed in Mexico City in 1928. He was also a founder of the Communist party in Cuba.

About mid-day student groups emerged into the streets and began disrupting traffic by throwing debris into the streets. Police appeared on the scene, stones were thrown and shots fired into the air. The initial melee terminated when police retired on orders from President Batista.

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Shortly thereafter students again sallied forth, carrying with them a straw effigy labeled "Batista Asesino" which they burned. They then marched through town toward the monument, near La Punta Fortress, erected in memory of the student martyrs executed by the Spaniards in 1871. They were intercepted at San Lazaro and Prado and repulsed by streams of water from fire trucks. Shots were again fired when students stormed the trucks. During this affray, Ortodoxo leaders "Milo" OCHOA, Pardo LLADA and others emerged from the Ortodoxo headquarters just across the Prado and were arrested and held for several hours.

With dispersal of students from the Prado area, the day's rioting ceased. The toll was 14 injured by rocks or bullets, some seriously. The list included police, students and spectators.

In a speech on the evening of the riots, before members of his new "Partido Acción Progresista," Batista referred to the day's events and stated that the "communists lie in ambush." He added that Communism must be combated for two reasons: because it tried to introduce slavery into the world and because it is a clear danger for Cuba. He asserted that he ordered retirement of the public forces from the university believing that it was not students who carried out the riot, "but be sure that

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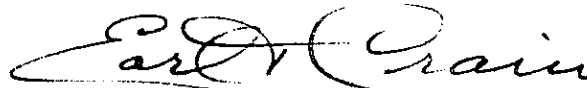
those responsible will go before the courts." Batista said he was certain that the youth of certain political parties were paid to provoke disorders.

Police authorities have charged that the students were instigated to riot by Communists and that persons other than students took leading roles in the disturbances. Student leaders have asserted that shots against the police were not fired by students. They allege that all students taking part in the disturbances were searched before leaving the campus to make sure that only "moral" weapons would be employed by them. It is not unlikely that outsiders did take advantage of the situation.

These riots were the first of any consequence that have occurred since the coup of March 10, 1952.

Newspaper clippings are enclosed.

For the Ambassador:



Earl T. Crain  
Acting Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures <sup>111</sup>

Newspaper clippings

11/21

JAN 16 1953

# Students, Police Clash in Streets; Shots Fired; 11 Hurt

## Government Appeals To Good Sense Of Student Groups

Minister of Information Ernesto de la Fe last night issued an appeal to the "good sense of the various groups of students" and warned that, while the "government confirms its most absolute respect for all political ideas contending within the nation," it will act energetically and without hesitation in the face of the provocations of criminals and agitators who seek to disrupt public order.

In his statement, De la Fe blamed the street rioting in Havana yes-

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## Riots Follow Defiling Of Bust of Mella

Eleven people were injured, one seriously, and a total of 51 were arrested in a series of clashes between Havana University students and the police yesterday, following the defacement of the bust of the student Julio Antonio Mella, assassinated in Mexico during the Machado regime, at the entrance to the University.

The disorders began early yesterday morning at various points in the vicinity of the University, when indignant students found Mella's bust defiled with tar or black paint.

The protests began with the hurling of old boxes, cans and other refuse onto L. St. blocking traffic which was detoured. Police cars soon arrived on the scene of the protest.

A large group of students gathered on the University steps and organized for a public demonstration in protest against the unidentified defilers. Shortly after 1:00 p. m., the students marched down L. St. but were intercepted by group of motorized police at the corner of 23rd and L Streets. In the resulting clash, police and students came to blows and shots were fired. Two by-standers and the vice-president of the Commercial Sciences Students Association, Guillermo Aparicio Garces, were wounded. Garces had a bullet wound in his left foot and his ear was bitten. One of the by-standers, Roberto Garcia Fernandez, was shot through the left arm and the bullet entered his chest. He was in a serious condition last night.

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## GOVERNMENT . .

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terday afternoon on the "disruptive plans of the Authentic-Orthodox Communist factions supported by the money of the so-called 'Miami Group' and which have been denounced by the authorities."

He said the government realized that the defacement of the statue of the student martyr Antonio Mel-la had been carried out by the same sick and criminal minded people who were behind the events of King's Day Eve, and the petard planted at the home of the editor of "Alerta" and added that strict orders had been given to the police forces to unmask and capture the perpetrator of the outrage which sparked yesterday's student riots.

He also claimed that the police had been fire upon.

The Minister said the government from the very beginning, had declared its recognition of the autonomy of Havana University, but that this autonomy could not be used as shield to convert the University into an arsenal and base of operations for groups of gangsters.

## RIOTS FOLLOW . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Fire engine hoses finally dissolved the demonstration as the police were ordered by Police Chief Brigadier-General Rafael Salas Cañizares to withdraw from the immediate area. The police were finally drawn back from the immediate vicinity of the University.

Fighting broke out again late in the afternoon, when students marched down San Lazaro Street toward Prado, planning to go to the monument to students massacred by the Spanish Colonial government over 70 years ago. Police and fire engines were waiting for them, however. Shots were fired in the air and the hoses of the fire engines were turned on. Sailors at La Punta also fired into the air. The police claimed the students stoned them and fired on them. The injured in this second clash included Lt. Luis Cancio, of the Army Fire Department, Corp. Bienvenido Perez Sanchez, driver of the fire engine, and Private Roberto Fernandez, who was hit in the stomach. A total of 37 people were arrested, some of whom were found in possession of firearms.

The police also arrested Jose Pardo Llada, an Orthodox leader, Erasmo Gomez, Alfredo Esquivel, Francisco Alonso de la Torre, and Max Letvink, who were in a car on Prado not far from the shooting. They were still held at the Investigations Bureau last night.

The police broke into a meeting of Orthodox leaders discussing the dissensions in their party and arrested Emilio Ochoa, Jose M. Aguilera, Humberto Nignau, Jose Iglesias Lastra, Ignacio Gonzalez de Mendoza, Francisco Maldonado and Ernesto Stock, who were later released.

Also arrested were Alvaro Barba, president of the University Student Federation and Fidel Castro, also a member of the FEU. These arrests were made at the COCO radio station.

Other persons arrested included Wilfredo Ventura, Orlando Ventura, Angel Lara, Antonio Benales and Ruben Batista.

The police were held ready in their barracks for possible further outbreak last night.

Tourists strolling on Havana's Prado scattered in panic when the shooting broke out, running to cover.