

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DATE DISTR. 28 July 1959	PRECEDENCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ROUTINE

COUNTRY Nicaragua/Honduras	PLACE ACQUIRED
SUBJECT Clash of University Students and Guardia Nacional at Leon, Nicaragua. <i>(Seven students killed, many wounded. Public indignation)</i>	REFERENCES
DATE OF INFORMATION 23-24 July 1959	

1. The political aim of the student parade in Leon, Nicaragua, on 23 July 1959 was to protest the deaths of Napoleon UBILLA Baca and Victor Manuel RIVAS Gomez, former Guardia Nacional officers who participated in the recent invasion from Costa Rica, and to publicize disapproval of the incident at El Chaparral, Honduras, where some Nicaraguan rebels were killed by the Honduran Army, including one Nicaraguan university student. The students were not carrying bombs or arms, and when the procession reached a point one block from Guardia headquarters, intending to turn left and circle the block, Guardia Nacional troops, commanded by Major ORTIZ, warned the students to halt. During a verbal exchange in which the students shouted anti-government slogans, Guardia Nacional troops hurled tear gas into the procession, causing the crowd to begin to retreat. At this point the troops opened fire, some firing into the air, others into the group of students. The incident was over within

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fifteen minutes, but communications between Leon and Managua were suspended for about an hour following the clash, on orders of the Guardia Nacional. The demonstrators did not attack any troops or Guardia Nacional buildings. The students organized their own parade, which was not intended as provocation, and no Guardia Nacional troops were wounded. The latest casualty counts: seven students are dead, 35 are wounded, two of whom may not live.

2. The burial of the two students at the National University in Leon was held on the afternoon of 24 July and was attended by three thousand people. Guardia Nacional troops, who were under orders to remain in barracks, were not seen during the funeral. Leon residents and students dressed in black attended the rites; residents flew Nicaraguan flags draped in black, and all stores in Leon closed for the day. The student governing body, whose president was one of the wounded, voted an eight-day mourning period, but agreed to return to their classes since these offered the best means of continuing activities and keeping in touch with students of other schools. A mimeographed student manifesto circulated in Leon denounced the unprovoked criminal action of the government troops. A sign was posted on a university building calling on the students not to testify before the military commission investigating the incident.

3. About 200 to 300 students participated in a manifestation in Managua on 24 July. Only four were wounded, one seriously; four persons were arrested, none of them Communists. [Comment: The Nicaraguan Government is claiming that Communist agitators used the students to provoke the Guardia Nacional, but no Communists have been arrested as yet. On 24 July President Luis SOMOZA issued a statement for the press, lamenting the deaths, and promised justice but avoided open criticism of the

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action taken by the Guardia Nacional troops. On 25 July Leon and Managua were quiet and most of the shops reopened in Leon. There was widespread public indignation but no evidence of organized civic action against the government. The students can be expected to play up the shooting of peaceful demonstrators in an attempt to attract the attention and sympathy of student groups and public opinion in other Central American countries. It is felt that the publicity will serve to discredit the SMOZA regime, nullifying its creditable performance in handling the recent invasion, which was neutralized with little bloodshed. The Leon shootings are providing further ammunition for SMOZA's enemies, who will be represented at the meetings of the Foreign Ministers in Santiago, Chile.)

End of Message

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