

59 U.S. Students Start a Visit To Cuba, Defying Washington

HAVANA, June 30 (UPI)—Fifty-nine United States college students arrived here today as guests of the Castro Government. They came in defiance of warnings by the United States State Department that they faced possible prison sentences and \$5,000 fines.

The group, led by Levi Laub of Columbia University, arrived aboard a Cubana Airlines plane from Prague, Czechoslovakia, where they said they had flown first to avoid restrictions on more direct travel to Cuba.

They were welcomed by student union leaders of Havana University.

Robert Williams, a Negro fugitive from a kidnapping charge stemming from a racial clash in Monroe, N. C., was at the airport to greet the 10 Negroes in the American group.

Mr. Laub said the students would spend a month in Cuba as guests of the Cuban Institute for Friendship Among Peoples.

Students Warned en Route

The students were warned of the fines and sentences they faced by State Department officials at Amsterdam and London airports, where they stopped en route.

Travel to Cuba without a specially validated passport is against the law for United States citizens. The students were told that they could be prosecuted upon their return.

Mr. Laub handed out a three-page statement to reporters when he got off the plane. The statement said the students did not feel they were violating any law in making the trip and "we don't see why the U.S. Government should attempt to prohibit U.S. citizens, especially students, from seeing Cuba."

The statement continued: "To deny Americans the right to travel to any country is contrary to the essence of democratic society. The attempt to

limit the right to travel to whatever country an American citizen deems fit is also attempted interference with an individual's freedom of expression."

The statement said the students had no political motives for the trip and merely wanted to "see what's taking place on this island 'ninety miles from Florida' as we are tired of canned reports, misleading synopses, garbled accounts, half-truths and no-truths."

Statement Issued Here

The statement issued by the students on arriving in Cuba appeared similar to a statement made available here yesterday, which said 64 students and recent graduates had left on the "study-tour" last Tuesday.

The statement here listed group representatives as follows:

John Coatsworth, Wesleyan; Wayne Combash, Oakland City College; Sal Cucchiari, City College of New York; Levi Laub, Columbia; John Milton, San Francisco State; Larry Phelps, University of North Carolina; Ellen Shallit, City College; Todd Stuart, Harvard; John Thomas, Oakland City College, and Philip Abbott Luce, for a press committee.

"We are traveling to Cuba despite State Department press releases and public notices attempting to limit the travel of American citizens because we consider it our right to travel where we want and when we want," the statement said.

"We are going to Cuba because we are not the 'tools' of any ideological bloc nor are we even in ideological agreement among ourselves. All shades of political opinion are to be found within our group. There is to be no censorship nor pressure placed on any of the young people going to Cuba."