

# ***FIVE CONGRESSMEN SHOT IN HOUSE BY 3 PUERTO RICAN NATIONALISTS; BULLETS SPRAY FROM GALLERY***



**SEIZED IN SHOOTING:** Capitol police hold three Puerto Rican Nationalists after they fired from gallery seats into House chamber, wounding five Representatives. Prisoners, left to right, are Lolita Lebron, Rafael C. Miranda and Andres Cordero.

Associated Press Wirephoto

## **CAPITOL IN UPROAR**

**Woman, Accomplices  
Quickly Overpowered  
—High Bonds Set**

**By CLAYTON KNOWLES**  
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, March 1 — Five members of the Congress of The United States were shot down on the floor of the House of Representatives today.

Their assailants, at least three Puerto Rican Nationalists, shouted for freedom of their homeland as they fired murderously although at random from a spectators' gallery just above the House floor. Possibly twenty-five shots were fired.

Bullets rained down from two German Lugers and other pistols of lesser caliber. They crashed through the table of the majority leader and chairs around it, and struck near the table of the Minority Leader beyond. The time was 2:32 P. M.

House members at first thought the sounds were those of firecrackers. But as their colleagues fell or took cover as they heard the slugs hit around them, all realized what was happening.

The wounded House members: **ALVIN M. BENTLEY**, 35 years old, multimillionaire Michigan Republican, shot through lung, liver and intestine. Condition critical.

**BEN F. JENSEN**, 61, Republican of Iowa, shot in back. Condition serious.

**CLIFFORD DAVIS**, 56, Democrat of Tennessee, shot in the leg. Condition good.

**GEORGE H. FALLON**, 51, Democrat of Maryland, leg wound. Condition good.

**KENNETH A. ROBERTS**, 41, Democrat of Alabama, leg wound. Condition good.

### **Assallants Subdued**

Within a matter of minutes, the episode, which threw the Capitol and most of official Washington into an uproar, was at an end. Gallery attendants, aided by spectators, Capitol police and even one House member, quickly overcame and disarmed the three gun wielders.

The three Puerto Ricans, all residents of New York, were booked at police headquarters on charges of assault with intent to kill. They gave their names and addresses as:

**LOLITA LEBRON**, 34, 315 West Ninety-fourth Street.

**RAFAEL C. MIRANDA**, 25, 120 South First Street, Brooklyn.

**ANDRES CORDERO**, or **FI-GUEROA**, 29, of 108 East 103d Street.

A fourth Puerto Rican, also resident in New York, was arrested at a downtown bus station and booked on the same charge.

He was booked as **Irving Flores**, 27, also of 108 East 103d Street, described by Police Chief Robert Murray as a fourth member of the shooting party who had fled the Capitol successfully. When arrested, Flores still had a .45 caliber pistol.

Later, United States Commissioner Cyril S. Lawrence ordered all four held under \$100,000 bonds each. He put off a preliminary hearing until March 10 to give them time to get counsel. Five counts of assault with intent to

Continued on Page 16, Column 1



# FIVE CONGRESSMEN SHOT IN CAPITOL

Continued From Page 1

kill 'were brought against each of the four, one count for each of the legislators wounded.

Chief Murray reported tonight that all, except Flores, had confessed to the shootings. Edgar E. Scott, deputy chief of detectives, said that Flores, though identified by Mrs. Lebron as one of the party, would not admit being present at the scene.

At police headquarters Mrs. Lebron said none of the four had intended to kill anyone.

She said the shooting date had been picked to coincide with the opening of the Inter-American Conference at Caracas.

Three other Puerto Ricans, all residents of Florida, were picked up as the police threw a dragnet around the whole Capitol area. They were not booked immediately and appeared to have no connection with the shooting.

Mrs. Lebron was identified as an associate of the wife of one of the Puerto Rican Nationalists who made an attempt on the life of President Truman outside Blair House on Nov. 1, 1950.

A note found in her purse by the police read:

"Before God and the world my blood claims for the independence of Puerto Rico. My life I give for the freedom of my country. This is my cry for victory in our struggle for independence. Which for more than a half century has tried to conquer that land that belongs to Puerto Rico.

"I state that the United States of America are betraying the sacred principles of mankind in their continuous subjugation of my country, violating their rights to be a free nation and a free people in their barbarous torture of our apostle of independence, Don Pedro Albizu Campos."

Across the back of the note was scrawled "I take responsible for all."

## Strike Without Warning

The two men who stormed Blair House steps seeking to kill President Truman also were followers of Albizu Campos. Today as then, there was no warning as the assailants struck.

The House members—at least 243 of them in the chamber at the time—were set up like sitting ducks for their assailants. The Puerto Ricans literally sprayed the House floor with their fire.

As they shot, they screamed: "Viva Puerto Rico."

Most of the members said later that they thought a string of firecrackers had been set off in the gallery when the guns began to fire. It was only as they saw their colleagues falling about them that they realized what was going on.

"Hit the deck," shouted Representative James E. Van Zandt, Republican of Pennsylvania. He then dashed from the chamber and up one flight to the gallery to help disarm one of the gunmen.

Similar outcries went up from all over the House floor and from the galleries. Piercing the confusion were the screams of the Puerto Rican woman: "Viva Puerto Rico!" She emptied the chambers of a big Luger pistol, holding it in her two hands, and waving it wildly.

Then, she threw down the pistol and whipped out a Puerto Rican flag, which she waved but never did manage to unfurl fully. As she screamed, her companions trained their weapons on the House floor.

Five of the bullets hit Congressmen. Four shots shattered the wood paneling behind the Democrats. Four more pierced or splintered chairs. Two others struck the big mahogany table behind which sat Majority Leader Charles A. Halleck of Indiana and Leslie C. Arends of Illinois, the Republican whip.

A splinter from the desk hit Mr. Arends in the face, piercing the left eyelid. It was only then that he realized that it was "business, not a misguided prank," as he said later.

## Jensen Keeps His Feet.

Beside the majority table, Mr. Bentley keeled over. Representative Jensen, standing near the door, was struck, but kept his feet to stagger to the cloakroom where he collapsed.

Across the aisle, a bullet pierced a chair and lodged in Representative Roberts' leg. Other bullets got Mr. Davis and Mr. Fallon in their legs.

After an exploratory operation at Casualty Hospital about five hours after the shooting, Mr. Bentley tonight was given a "50-50 chance" to live by the surgeon who performed the operation.

Dr. Joseph R. Young, Chief of Staff at Casualty Hospital, said there would be a critical period of "about seventy-two hours," and disclosed that the operation had shown "extensive visceral damage," including damage to the liver.

He reported that the bullet had apparently torn through the liver with "explosive force," so that there was danger of infection. He also described the danger of peritonitis as "very great."

As realization of what was happening spread, members threw themselves to the floor or behind chairs. Others seemed frozen as they looked up to watch the Puerto Ricans shooting.

Representative Pat Hillings, Republican of California, a veteran of fighting in the South Pacific, said:

"I'd been shot at before but never saw who was firing at me."

Speaker Joseph W. Martin Jr. of Massachusetts, presiding at the time, whirled behind a marble pillar for protection. He later said, "I think the shot that got Jensen was meant for me."

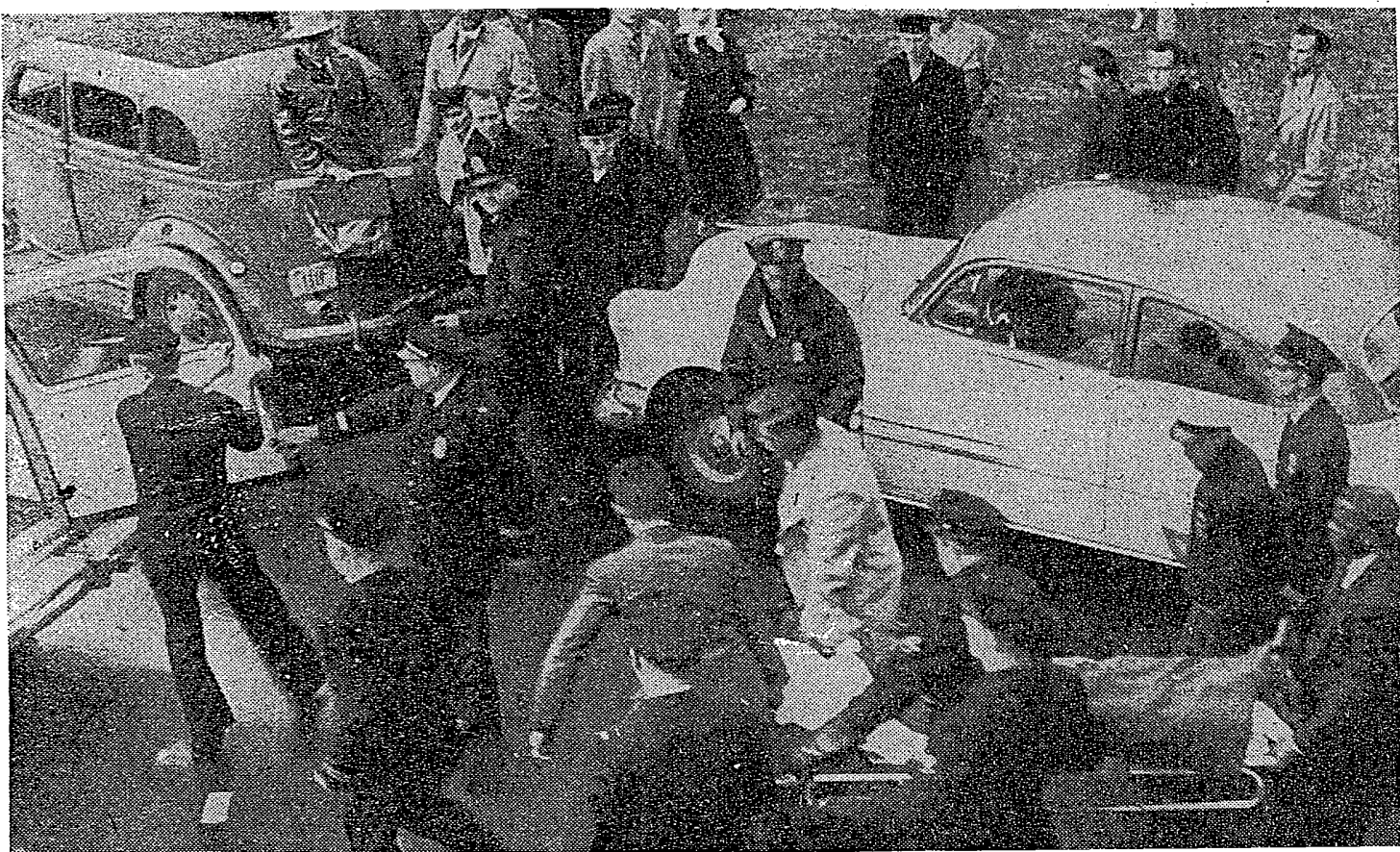
## Two Dozen Shots Fired.

"I think I got hit before I heard the shooting," said Mr. Fallon at the hospital tonight. His reaction was typical. While the force of the shot threw him to the floor, Mr. Fallon did not actually realize he had been shot until he noticed blood on his hip.

Even when some saw the guns smoking, their first reaction was that demonstrators were shooting blank cartridges.

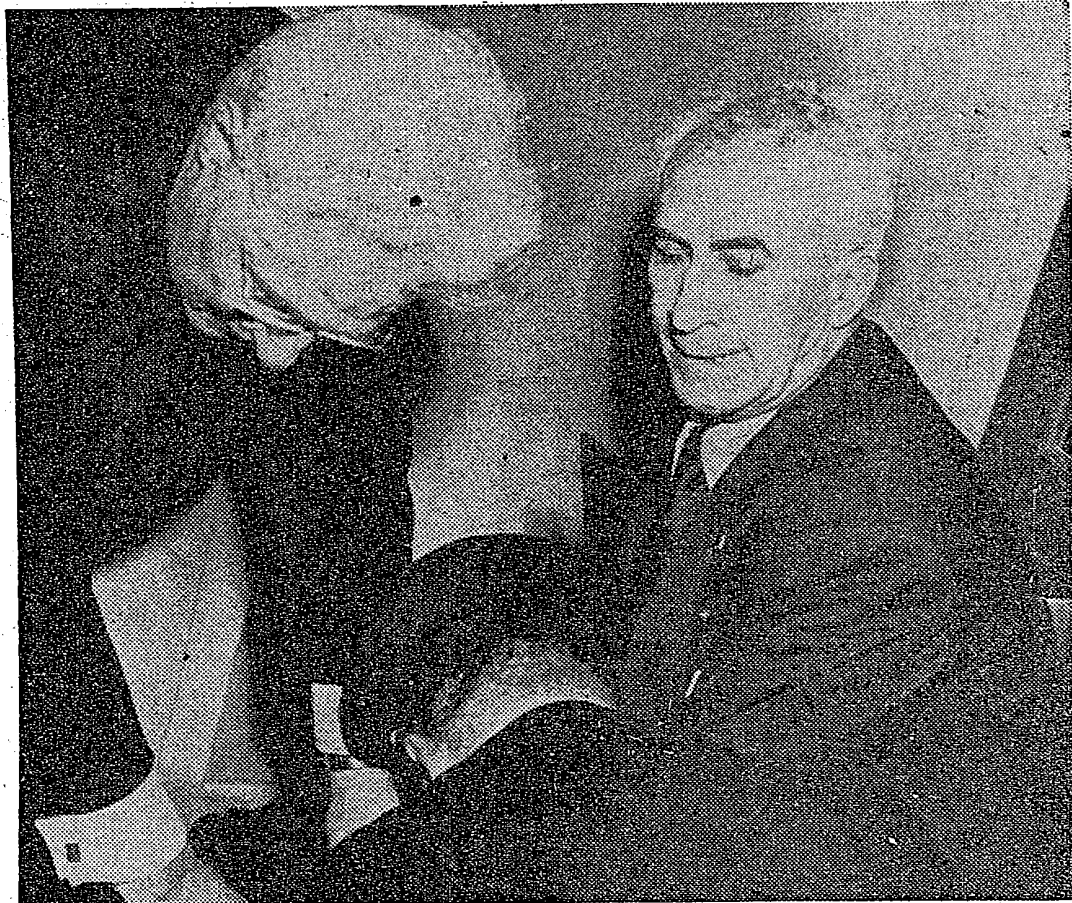
Representative Louis P. Gra-

# Aftermath of Attack in Which Five House Members Were Shot by Puerto Rican Nationalists



Representative Clifford Davis of Tennessee is carried to ambulance after demonstration in which three Puerto Rican Nationalists, screaming hysterically for freedom for their

homeland, fired pistol shots into the House chamber from the visitors' gallery. Services of the Washington police, hospitals and emergency units were mobilized to meet situation.



One of the assailants is obscured as guards subdue him in a corridor after his attempt to reload pistol. Holding him down are Doorkeepers Charles Santoro, left, and Mathew Fardella, right, and a Capitol policeman. Altogether, between 20 and 25 shots were fired.



Representative Kenneth A. Roberts of Alabama is carried on stretcher down the steps of the Capitol. Some members of the House, taken completely unaware, thought someone had set off a string of firecrackers until they saw their colleagues falling among them. In the fascination of their horror, visitors and Representatives, even after they had thrown themselves to the floor, watched the galleries as the demonstrators were firing their shots.



Associated Press Wirephotos

Patrolman Jack Brunner of the Capitol police shows correspondents the Puerto Rican flag taken from Mrs. Lolita Lebron, one of the demonstrators. After she had emptied her pistol, Mrs. Lebron cried, "Viva Puerto Rico!" and waved the flag, though she never did manage to unfurl it fully.

voice vote but the Democrats demanded a division.

The Speaker asked for all those supporting the rule to rise. He went through his count and just was about to call for the "nays" when the shooting began. He later said he had counted 168 members for the rule.

After the confusion died down somewhat, Mr. Martin returned to the chair, ordered the House floor cleared of nonmembers and proceeded, upon motion, to adjourn the House.

President Eisenhower, informed of the shootings, put through a quick call to Mr. Martin to offer any help he could. Later in the evening, the White House canceled the Congressional reception scheduled for tomorrow night.

Security provisions at the Capitol, White House, Interior and Justice departments were tightened immediately. The Capitol was cleared as both houses quickly quit for the day. Admission to the galleries henceforth will be by card only.

Thousands of persons rushed to the Capitol Plaza within minutes of the shooting. Not since the British burned the Capitol in August, 1814, had there been such an incident there.

Squad cars of the Metropolitan police force sped to join the Capitol police, who guard the building day and night. The entire area was barricaded in fifteen minutes, so quickly that 2,000 persons were caught inside the cordon. Several news photographers were whacked and a few received painful bruises when the police started to swing clubs to disperse the cameramen.

The Plaza, a broad space on the east side of the Capitol, is at the rear of the building. However, most persons enter the national legislative halls there and it has been the scene of inaugurations and historic visits for years.

ham, a Pennsylvania Republican, stood watching as did many others on the floor, participating in a vote when the bullets began to rain down.

"Get down, you damn fool! Those are bullets," shouted Representative Benjamin James, a Republican colleague from Pennsylvania.

It was over in a matter of seconds. A full count on the number of shots fired has yet to be announced but the number probably was somewhere between twenty and twenty-five. Two shots, apparently fired by the woman, buried themselves in the House ceiling.

Immediately after the firing ceased, the paralysis that gripped the members and the galleries ended.

There was a rush to the Visitors' Gallery adjacent to the press section, where the Puerto Ricans were fighting their way toward the exit, smoking pistols still in hand.

First out was the woman, still clutching the Puerto Rican flag. She was quickly collared. Then came one of her male companions, who was hit from at least four quarters and knocked to the ground.

In the group that struck him down was Boyd Crawford, clerk of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Mr. Crawford, an excellent pistol shot himself, thrust his finger under the trigger guard of the gun the Puerto Rican carried. It kept him from shooting.

"Then we sat on him until the

police arrived," said the 190-pound clerk.

Helping disarm this gunman was Representative Van Zandt, a veteran of both World Wars and former national chairman of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Also in on the team play was Frank Wise, a suburbanite recuperating from illness and visiting in the gallery to get some of the relaxation his doctor had ordered.

"I didn't know whether to take cover or do my duty," he said. "I closed with him and grabbed his arm."

Another spectator, whose identity was undisclosed, threw a headlock around a second gunman. As they wrestled out the door, the spectator cried: "Look out! He's got a gun."

## Doorman Wades In

Closing in to help was another group of willing hands, including those of William Belcher, a doorman, who suffered a heart attack afterward and was hospitalized.

The final subduing was administered by a 71-year-old Capitol policeman. Despite his years, Patrolman A. S. (Buck) Rodgers, a former Texas farmer, grabbed the Puerto Rican by the coat collar and brought his own hand down sharply edgewise on the wrist of his victim's gun hand.

A big Luger clattered to the tile floor, close by the other Puerto Rican, head bleeding and still lying on the floor with Mr. Crawford sitting on him.

The actual arrests were made

by Capt. Carl Schramm, a city detective heading the city police detail on the House side of the Capitol.

On the floor, meanwhile, hasty first aid was being administered. Representatives A. L. Miller of Nebraska and Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, both medical doctors, gave orders for emergency care of the wounded. Both gave particular attention to Mr. Bentley, who bled profusely.

Dr. Judd, a former medical missionary in China, diagnosed Mr. Bentley's condition as serious. Representative Percy Priest, sitting beside Mr. Roberts, whipped off his own necktie for use as a tourniquet.

Out in the cloakroom, Mr. Jensen gritted through clenched teeth: "They got me, they got me. Did they hit me in the spine?" Anxious members sought to reassure him.

Many of those in the gallery thought the Puerto Ricans were shouting "Viva Mexico" but some later confessed that they probably made this out of the jumble of Spanish because of the fact that the "wetback bill," governing the flow of Mexican farm labor to the United States, was the business before the House.

At 2:27, shortly before the shooting began, a member had demanded a quorum count. Speaker Martin stated there were 243 members present.

With the quorum established, the resolution before the House for a rule, officially bringing the bill to the floor, was called up for a vote. It appeared to pass on a