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2 WEEKS BEFORE R.F.K. ASSASSINATION ^{Register} 6-11-68

'Sirhan Attended Castroite Meet'

By SAM CAMPBELL

Two weeks prior to Robert Kennedy's assassination, the accused killer attended a pro-Castro meeting in the Hollywood Hills of Los Angeles, according to information in the

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hand of this Freedom Newspapers editor.

Jose Duarte, a former major in Castro's rebel army, said he encountered Sirhan Sirhan at a meeting in a mansion on Amesbury Road on May 21.

When Sirhan's picture was published in a Los Angeles newspaper June 6, Duarte said he recognized the man who since has been indicted in the fatal shooting of Sen. Robert Kennedy.

Duarte said Sirhan later was independently identified by three other Cubans who attended the May 21 meeting.

Now a resident of Los Angeles, Duarte said he broke with Castro shortly after the successful takeover of Cuba in 1953. He currently heads a Cuban exile organization called UNARE, that opposes the Castro regime.

At the May 21 meeting, Duarte said, he got into a scuffle with Sirhan when he (Duarte) began to make an anti-Castro speech.

"He very angrily stood up and accused me of being a CIA agent," the Cuban said. He described Sirhan as "a small fellow, olive skin, looked like a jockey, about 125-130 pounds."

He said he sat in a group and that he spoke English with a heavy accent.

Sirhan accused Duarte of being paid by the Central Intelligence Agency and told the gathering of about 50 persons that the CIA had done the same thing in the Middle East with the Arabs, Duarte stated.

The scuffle broke out some minutes later when Sirhan called him a liar, Duarte said.

"We started pushing each other. Some people interfered. So they had to calm him down. I was quite excited, also," Duarte said.

Duarte recounted that he asked Sirhan to settle the matter outside and "he was ready to do that." He said Sirhan left the

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house "with several of his friends."

The Amesbury Road address is in the Los Feliz area near Griffith Park. Duarte said he happened to go there May 21 with other members of the exile organization when they got a copy of a handbill. The flyer, he said, advertised what promised to be a pro-Castro meeting.

Duarte said the program consisted of a talk by a "young man" identified only as "Paul." He said the spokesman showed slides of Cuban scenes and of students who had made a trip to Cuba. The talk by "Paul," he said, included derogatory remarks about the United States, praise of Castro, and a description of conditions inside Cuba.

At one point, he said, "Paul" took up a collection for a person whom he identified as "Newton," who was being held by Oakland authorities.

Detective Sgt. Roy Anderson

of the Oakland Police Department said that "Newton" was Hughie Newton, 26, president of the Black Panther Society, who is being held in the county jail awaiting trial for first degree murder in the shooting death last November of Patrolman John Fry.

After the assassination Duarte said he went to the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart Division and picked Sirhan's photograph from among others in the police file. It was not the same photograph that was in the paper, he said.

Duarte said other Cubans who attended the May 21 meeting recognized Sirhan from television pictures.

The information that Sirhan had been seen at what was described as a pro-Castro meeting came to this writer Saturday. At that time, the writer questioned Duarte in Los An-

geles. He had talked to the Cuban once previously.

That was in December, 1967, when Duarte appeared in Anaheim voluntarily to answer questions about the attendance of members of his organization at a performance of the Moscow State Circus in the Convention Center, where a stink bomb was thrown.

Monday, this writer went to Los Angeles a second time. He questioned Duarte again, but in a different sequence, and asked to be taken to the mansion on Amesbury Road where the May 21 meeting was said to have taken place.

Duarte agreed to do so immediately. He described in advance what the house would look like and how it would be reached. Duarte directed the way there without hesitation.

Amesbury is a winding road, and the specific address where the May 21 meeting that Sirhan attended is difficult to find.