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Cuban exiles bomb radical coffeeshouse

SUE MARSHALL

A group of individuals, tentatively identified as "Gusanos" (anti-Castro Cuban exiles), attacked the Haymarket, a movement coffeeshouse, on Monday evening, April 13, burning the building out with gasoline and using some sort of Mace or nausea gas on twenty people present.

Roger McCready of the Haymarket staff recounted the incident: "At approximately 9:30 p.m., a man and woman came to the door and said that they were having trouble starting their car. Two persons went out to help, and as one of them was holding the front door open, several armed men began getting out of cars and entering the building, led by a big man carrying an M-1 carbine."

Mickey Haskin of the Committee on Latin-American Solidarity reported that the men were carrying a .45 automatic and two other pistols, several cans of gasoline, and an M-1 with a banana clip. After the leader ordered people in the front of the building to lie on the floor with their hands behind them, addressing them as "motherfuckers" and kicking and beating some, he went upstairs and dragged down four staff members who were in the process of eating dinner.

While patrons and staff were lying on the floor, the intruders sprayed everyone with a gas which induced crying and nausea. Mickey Haskin reported that when they sprayed his 3½-year-old son with the gas the men remarked, "This is what they do to you in Cuba." The child had to be treated at L.A. County-USC Medical Center for injuries caused by the gas, as was an adult patron, Ron White.

The men were reported as being Latin-looking individuals who addressed each other in non-Chicano Spanish and made continual threats to shoot anyone who moved. Some were dressed in Army attire. While some held the staff and patrons on the floor at gunpoint, others

started a blaze on the upper story of the building. Although the victims were weakened by the gas, everyone was able to escape. One man reported that the flames were about 150 feet high as he ran out.

Roger McCready estimated the damage at anywhere from \$35,000 to \$50,000, but stated that the Haymarket would definitely re-open, in another building if necessary. He speculated that the reason for the attack might have been that a speaker on Che Guevara was featured Saturday night, and a documentary film on the Cuban revolution, *Fidel*, is scheduled for May 1, 2 and 3. Roger said that the film will be shown in spite of the threat.

"Gusanos" (Spanish for "worm") are a group which have been considered responsible for several other attacks of terrorism, both locally and on the East Coast, such as the bombing of the Ash Grove, the invasion of the First Unitarian Church in Los Angeles several months ago, the bombing of the Miami theater where the movie "Che" was being shown, and various fights at peace marches and attacks on individuals belonging to left-wing, radical groups.

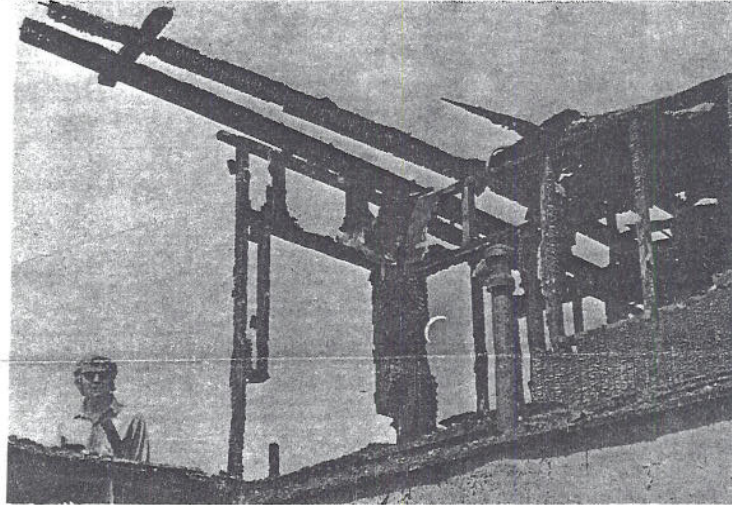
"On March 13 the L.A. Times had an article on a Cuban exile who was convicted of the bombings here not too long ago of an airline office," Mickey Haskin said at a press conference Thursday. "The FBI testified in his trial that these Gusanos received their supplies from the Central Intelligence Agency. These are the gentlemen who were blowing up the airlines. The man who was convicted is named Hector Conalia. He is 31 years old and he was sentenced to one to five years in jail for [the] bombings. Meanwhile, in New York, the Black Panthers on conspiracy charges will not even have a trial."

"This is just one of the instances of these bombings. You don't even hear of the bombings in the East by these Gusanos, who are getting light sentences, buying their arms from the CIA and working for the FBI...."

"The thing that's very important is that it's our tax money which is bringing these people here. We're supporting them on welfare far more than the Mexicans or the black minorities are receiving. They can earn more money going to college than I can working. The government has special funds and rates for these people, and anyone coming to Miami on these 'mercy flights' is predominantly white and well-educated. You won't find sugar-cane cutters. Anyone from 16 to 60 is a potential terrorist, and they're coming into this country at the taxpayers' expense...."

"[The bombing of the Haymarket] isn't an isolated event. They do this wherever someone's saying that Castro is feeding children."

The police and fire departments



Above: Scott Larsen of the Haymarket staff surveys arson damage.

Bottom: Full extent of the ruins.

—Photos by Allen Zak

arrived at the scene of the arson in less than ten minutes. One staff member reported that he heard a policeman remark to a fireman that the attackers were stupid not to have burned the building to the ground. The fireman is said to have replied, "No; they knew exactly what they were doing."

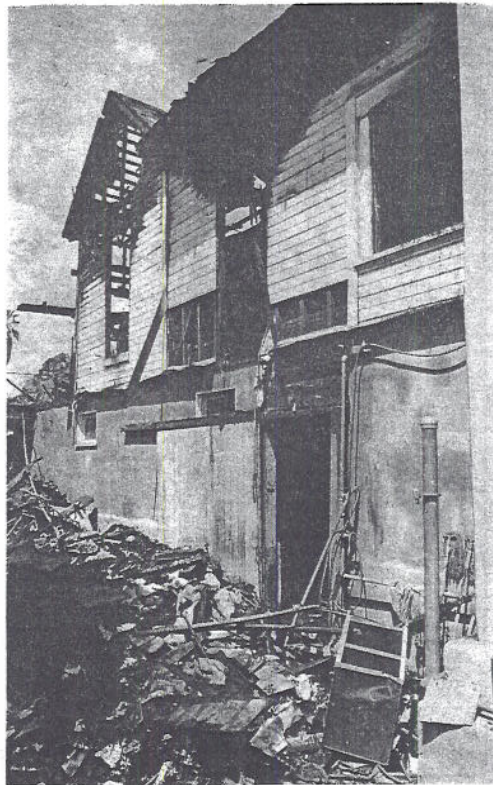
The Haymarket had been the subject of several instances of harassment, threatening phone calls, broken windows and bomb threats prior to this incident. Designed to be a radical meeting place serving the L.A. City College area, the Haymarket housed offices for the National Lawyers' Guild and CO-LAS, meeting places for Liberation Union, Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), a womens' liberation group, an experimental theatre group, Spanish classes, a print shop, coffee house and bookstore. Four staff members who had been living on the premises lost everything they owned in the fire.

A statement was issued by the Haymarket staff, which reads in part as follows:

"Attacks like this belie the distorted and exaggerated publicity given to the existence of so-called left-wing terrorism. It is really the self-proclaimed forces of 'law and order' who are responsible for the systematic practice of political intimidation by force.... We do not suffer from any illusion that the police will exert the same kind of concentrated effort in this case as if another Bank of America branch had been destroyed instead."

"Obviously this attack was intended to teach us a 'lesson,' but the only lesson we have learned is that we must work even harder to defeat racism and repression. We are not intimidated, and we will not be silent."

A mass meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening, April 16, to plan a response to terrorist attacks such as this one.



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