

"I am going to declare war"

It had been a long time since Dr. Orlando Bosch had talked to a reporter. He had been a fugitive for three years—ever since he boasted he was going “underground to direct the internationalization of the war” against his one-time comrade Fidel Castro. Sometimes, as he flew from one Latin American capital to another, he would forget what name he had decided to use and would begin fumbling among his four phony passports.

He had once been a practicing pediatrician, first in Cuba, then in Miami, but for more than 20 years now the tools of his real trade had been instruments of death—plastic explosives, rifles and bazookas. He led a group of Cuban exiles implicated in some 150 bombings and some 50 murders in the last two years (*New Times*, October 29, 1976). His group had been linked to the car-bomb assassination of Chilean exile leader Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., last September, and now he was under arrest in Caracas, Venezuela, charged with ordering the bombing of a Cuban commercial airliner last October 6, which killed 73 people. He is one of the most famous terrorists in the world.

A tall, heavy-set man with thick glasses, he was sitting in the sun in the Caracas prison when I walked up to him.

“Dr. Bosch?” I asked hesitantly.

“Yes?” he replied.

I introduced myself as a reporter from New York. He squinted as he carefully looked me over.

“How did you get in here?” he asked suspiciously.

I told him I had called his lawyer two weeks before and been told to come down to Venezuela. By the time I arrived, his lawyer had gone on vacation and I couldn't reach him. I was in despair. I'd flown 3,000 miles for nothing.

By Blake Fleetwood



Orlando Bosch is in a Venezuelan jail, charged with ordering the bombing of a Cuban plane in which 73 people died. In an exclusive interview, he talks about his years as a terrorist, his secret alliances with Latin American governments and his plans to get even with the “traitors” who put him in jail

It seemed that it would be impossible to see Bosch. I knew that Joanne Omang of the *Washington Post* had spent weeks in Caracas trying to see Bosch and hadn't been successful. In desperation I had called another lawyer, who surprised me with a simple suggestion. “Tomorrow is visiting day,” he said. “Be there at 8 a.m. and maybe you can get in.”

At eight the next morning, I showed up at the prison gates and saw two lines of visitors waiting to enter the prison. On the left were about 300 women burdened down with baskets of fruit, pies, cakes and fresh linen for their imprisoned menfolk. To the right stood the four male visitors to the prison. In a few minutes the line started to move and I followed along. I passed a table where someone asked me for my *cédula*. Although I understand some Spanish, this was not a word I knew. Everyone else handed him what looked like an I.D. card, so I took out my passport. He took it and gave me a small plastic stub. One of the guards, who spoke a rough, country Spanish that was difficult to understand, told me to put down my briefcase and ushered me into a small bathroom where I was frisked. Then my briefcase was quickly searched and handed back to me. I followed the other four men through two barred gates. And suddenly I realized I was in the prison—at liberty to find Bosch among the lounging prisoners. I asked one of the more respectable-looking prisoners where I could find Orlando Bosch.

“You're in the wrong place altogether. I'll take you to him.” And he did—through endless corridors and cell blocks. We ended up in a sunlit courtyard in a section of the prison reserved for special prisoners. He pointed to a man 20 feet away, as if he didn't want to

get too close to the most famous killer in all of South America. "Over there, at that table. That's him."

I told Bosch that not only hadn't they asked me whom I was going to see, but that they had somehow missed the compact tape recorder in my briefcase. Bosch, as it turned out, was anxious to talk to a foreign reporter, saying that the Venezuelan government had prevented other interviews. For six hours, over the din of homemade drums in a nearby courtyard, he poured out his story.

"Fidel Castro and I were born in Cuba the same month 50 years ago. We both came from fairly prosperous middle-class families. We both ended up at the University of Havana in the late 1940s. I was in medical school and president of the student council, and Castro was a delegate to the student council from the law school. Although we had our differences, we worked together often and were both elected to our positions from the same political party, which was very much in the center between the right and left. It's not like today when all Latin American universities are dominated by Marxists. We were both very anticommunist and anti-Batista and very nationalistic."

Bosch left Cuba in 1952 for two years of internship in pediatrics at Toledo Hospital in Ohio. "When I finished in 1954, I returned to my hometown of Santa Clara and set up a practice as a pediatrician. But the tyranny of the Batista dictatorship made me join up with Castro again.

"The Batista dictatorship was choking us. I became the leader of the July 26th Movement in my province and we won the fight. I was appointed to the government as a minister of communication. But even as the war was ending, we were having problems with the Communists. They were taking over everything. I complained, I fought against it, but there was nothing I could do. At the time, I still had faith in Castro and his revolution. But then it got too bad, and after a month I resigned from the government. That's when I started conspiring against Castro."

Bosch told me about the group of anti-Castro guerrillas he had led in the Escambray mountains in Cuba in 1960. Castro, Bosch says, sentenced him to death. After running out of supplies, he and his followers fled to Florida, where they found a benefactor in the CIA. At

New York free-lance writer Blake Fleetwood last wrote for New Times on mercury poisoning in Canada.

one point, the agency had up to 6,000 Cuban exiles on its payroll.

Bosch interrupted himself and took me to his cell, a small six-by-eight-foot room lined with Spanish tile wallpaper. A small Sony television sat on a shelf in the corner, and there were fresh "designer" sheets on the bed. Bosch introduced his cellmate, Luis Posada, who is also being held in connection with the plane bombing. Posada pulled out a box of Havana cigars and offered me one: "America may have an embargo against Cuban cigars, but we don't."

Bosch and Posada had worked together during the heyday of CIA-sponsored anti-Castro activities in the early sixties, including bombing missions against Cuban sugar mills and gunboat attacks against Castro's fishing boats. But, in 1963, after the Cuban missile crisis and the subsequent reduction of anti-Castro activities by the Kennedy administration, Bosch realized that the CIA was no longer wholeheartedly committed to his cause. "I felt betrayed by

"The Dominican government let me stay in the country and organize 'actions.' I wasn't going to church every day. We were conspiring there. Planning bombings and killings"

the Kennedy administration and by the CIA. They held out a dream to us and then let us down."

His own militancy had only increased. An exile group he led claimed credit for 11 bombing attacks against Cuban territory; six times Bosch was arrested for violating U.S. neutrality laws. Finally, on September 16, 1968, he was caught in the act of firing a makeshift bazooka into the hull of a Polish ship docked in Miami.

Most of the testimony against Bosch at his subsequent trial came from Ricardo Morales Navarette. Morales is a man of many hats—terrorist, informant, hit man, mercenary and cop. He had been an agent in Castro's secret police, a CIA operative, a paid informant for the FBI, an agent provocateur, an anti-Castro terrorist. Today he is a top Venezuelan secret-police official.

Bosch and Morales met in Miami in 1968. Morales, acting on instructions from the FBI, supplied Bosch with dynamite and C-4 explosives for blowing up

ships. He also fixed and put in firing condition the bazooka Bosch used against the Polish ship. Morales testified that Bosch had said he was sorry that the bomb he planted in a ship called the *Osa-ka Maru* went off in Tampa Bay, because "the thing that he wanted was for that ship to blow up outside in the middle of the sea because he was anxious to see all the Japs swimming and screaming 'Wee, wee, wee!' while the ship was sinking."

Bosch was sentenced to ten years in federal prison, but was freed on parole on November 1, 1972.

During his imprisonment, Bosch's wife had left him. His voice broke as he told me about it. "This fight cost me my family and my five kids. They love me and are very proud of their daddy, but I was in jail for five years when they really needed me. They were 13, 11, 10, 8 and 5. They grew up without me. You know how society is there, all the drugs and crime. I wasn't a very good husband."

Bosch has always lived simply, wearing a succession of old baggy suits, often staying at the slum houses of his supporters. "If I had stayed in Miami and practiced medicine I would have made many millions by now. But I could not do that while my country was in agony. I have paid very much for the struggle, very expensively, but that's the only way I know. Sometimes a man has a higher duty than to his children. Sometimes a man has a duty to his homeland. That's the duty I feel."

Soon after his release from prison, Bosch's sense of duty took an ominous new turn. Detente between the United States and Communist countries was chilling to the militant Cuban exiles. A new exile group formed—the National Front for the Liberation of Cuba, or FLNC, said to be modeled after the Palestinian terrorists. Soon an FLNC death list began to circulate around Little Havana, and then one exile leader on that list, Jose Elias de la Torre, was assassinated. Ricardo Morales narrowly escaped death when a bomb exploded under the front seat of his car. The Miami homicide squad wanted to talk to Bosch, but he had disappeared.

A few months later, in a clandestine interview with the *Miami News*, Bosch praised the Torriente assassination as "a good lesson to the exile community, so that no one else will now come forth with phony theories to fool and rob the people." Nevertheless, he disclaimed direct responsibility, and said he had gone underground because he had coincidentally violated his parole by traveling to New Jersey around the time

of the assassination. But, he added, "I went underground to direct the internationalization of the war. I thought that the action people [terrorists] should get out of the U.S. and operate from different bases throughout Central and South America." In the next 18 months, four of the ten people on the FLNC list were killed, and a fifth had his legs blown off.

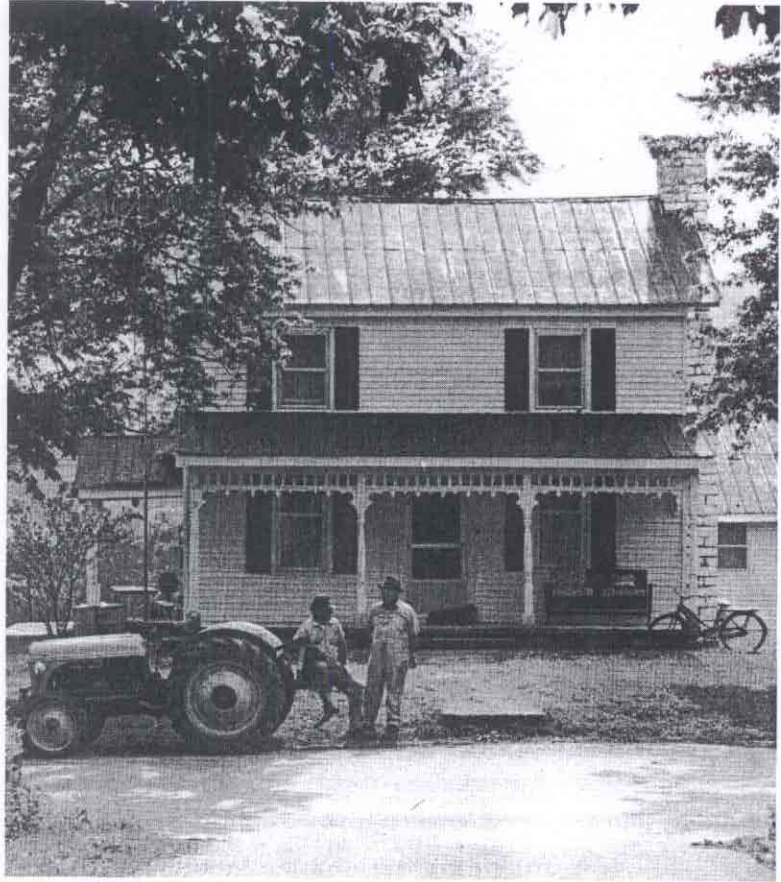
During that period, Bosch was traveling widely in the Caribbean. (Did he ever slip back into the U.S.? Bosch laughed. "If I have to go to the United States, I go.") His main goal was to forge alliances with friendly governments in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Venezuela—all countries with powerful Cuban exile communities.

Bosch claims that he made his first pact with the Venezuelan government in 1974. He had entered Venezuela from the Dominican Republic in June of that year, using a false Dominican passport in the name of Pedro Penya. "We set off a bomb in front of the Panamanian embassy in Caracas. We chose the 10th of October because that is the date the liberation of Cuba was announced in 1898. We did it because the Torrijos dictator [Panama's president] announced that he was going to Havana, and he did, and he kissed Castro. At the beginning the authorities blamed some Panamanian general who was in exile here. About two weeks later a Communist Cuban official was invited to speak at the Venezuelan-Cuban friendship club. I infiltrated into the audience and before the guy could speak the whole thing blew up. We had to do it. We didn't want to hurt anyone, but we just didn't want the guy to talk.

"I continued conspiring all that fall, raising money and planning bombings and other actions. But about the middle of November I was arrested by the DISIP [the Venezuelan secret political police]. They denied to the press that I was in the country or even under arrest. [The U.S. knew of Bosch's detention, but passed up the opportunity to extradite him.] Then I made my first formal agreement with the Venezuelan government. I dealt with Rivas Vasquez and Orlando Garcia [second and third in command of the DISIP].

"I promised that no more actions against Castro's friends would be taken in Caracas, and they promised me in the name of President Carlos Andres Perez that no high official of the Cuban regime would be allowed into Venezuela."

Bosch was then released. He flew to Curacao, where he met with Guillermo Novo and other Cuban exile leaders



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from the U.S. "From Curacao," he said, "Novo and I flew to Chile and made a lot of effort there." Bosch lived in Chile from December 1974 to December 1975, where he had another family with a Chilean woman. According to press reports, he lived as a guest of the government in a government apartment. "I passed several times from Chile to Argentina. We tried to shoot some Cuban diplomats in the middle of 1975 and we set off a bomb at the Mexican embassy in Buenos Aires. We made good contacts there with members of the triple-A party [a right-wing extremist group]. Because of the contacts we made down there, we set up the murder of two Cuban diplomats. That was part of the agreement I had with them. On August 9th last year, I had a call from our people down there. They said, 'You read the papers today?'" Bosch then made a slashing motion from



Carlos Rivero Collade, a former Cuban exile leader who has returned to Cuba, has written that Bosch received special instruction in assassination and personal attacks during his year in Chile from the Chilean National Intelligence Department. "The purpose behind the training was to have Bosch assassinate Andres Pascal Allende, nephew of the slain Chilean president," he wrote.

According to former Costa Rican Foreign Minister Gonzalo Facio, Bosch arrived in his country with the Andres Pascal assassination assignment given to him by the Chilean junta. Using a Chilean passport, a Chilean driver's license and other Chilean documents in the name of Hector D'Avanzo Cintolessi, Bosch entered the country from Nicaragua where, according to Facio, he had met with "close aides of President Anastasio Somoza." On the basis of intelligence reports Bosch was detained in Costa Rica and, while being held, according to Facio, "he told interrogators he intended to kill Secretary of State Kissinger, who was due to arrive here soon thereafter." Bosch admitted to me that he had been in Costa Rica, but would not acknowledge any role in the alleged assassination plots.

"After leaving Costa Rica I went to live in Santa Domingo until August of 1976. I had a number of good friends there and we planned many actions.

"The Dominican government let me stay in the country and organize actions. I wasn't going to church every day. We were conspiring there. Planning bombings and killings. . . People were coming in and going out. I was plotting with them. Secretly, of course."

Bosch's plotting culminated in a secret meeting of the top terrorist leaders of the hemisphere in the Dominican Republic. "The story of CORU [Coordination of the United Revolutionary Organizations] is true," he told me. "There was a meeting in the Bonao mountains of 20 men representing all different [Cuban exile] activist organizations. It was a meeting of all the military and political directors with revolutionary implications. It was a great meeting. Everything was planned there."

The top men from Alpha 66 (New Jersey), Abdalah (a New York-based youth group), the 2506 Brigade (veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion), FLNC, F 14 (New York City) and Accion Cubana (a group Bosch headed) met for two days in the Bonao mountains in early June, 1976. They decided to band together under an umbrella organization, CORU, with Bosch as the only identified spokesman and leader.



Was Bosch involved? Orlando Letelier (top) was murdered in Washington, D.C. The bombing of a Cuban jet off Barbados killed 73; in bottom photo, rescue workers examine a body pulled from the water

one end of his throat to another. The two members of the Cuban embassy in Argentina who were kidnapped August 9 last year, and who have not been heard from since, apparently will not be heard from again.

"We have contacts with people like that all over Latin America and even

in Europe. After doing everything that is possible in the South Cone [Chile, Argentina and Uruguay], we had three good actions [bombings or shootings]. It was not only the job that we did but also the image and relationships that we established while we were down there which was the main purpose."

"At last we had all the Cuban revolutionary fighters and leaders together, after 17 years. We decided to upscale the action after that. We wanted to beat the guy [Castro] or at least make his life impossible. I told them that we couldn't just keep bombing an embassy here and a police station there. We had to start taking more serious actions—hijacking." (According to a Cuban exile newspaper, one of the resolutions that came out of that meeting was a vow "to begin attacking Castro's planes in the air.")

"I accepted the leadership of CORU because I wanted to set everything up on an organized basis. We were tired of being frustrated and not accomplishing everything that we wanted to do." Bosch brought the other leaders up-to-date on the kind of help they could expect in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Chile. Then the group dispersed. In the 11 months since that meeting, Bosch boasts, CORU has been responsible for over 50 bombings in Miami, New York, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico and Argentina. (Bosch refused to admit any personal involvement in bombings within the United States; police sources say the leaders had agreed not to take credit for actions within the U.S. because the FBI was putting too much heat on them.)

After the Bonaio meeting the Dominican government called Bosch in and told him he was "too hot" and would have to leave the country.

"I told them how cowardly they were and how scared of Castro they had become, but to no avail. I went back to Costa Rica, and Oduber [the president], to make up for the damage they had done when they arrested me [for the alleged Kissinger assassination plot], gave me three passports. One from Peru and two others from Costa Rica. Then I went back to Nicaragua, where I began getting phone calls from Orlando Garcia [security adviser to Venezuelan President Perez and a top officer in the DISIP]. Garcia told me that he had been jogging with the president—he exercises with the president every day—and that Perez had told him to invite me to Venezuela to make a deal. I didn't pay any attention, but after he called me three times and sent me a visa, I came.

"At the airport I was met by Garcia and Ricardo Morales [the man whose testimony had sent Bosch to jail, and who had by that time become a high official in the DISIP]. They took me to a luxurious government apartment in the Anauco Hilton and we made a deal. I agreed that there would not be any actions in Venezuela, Costa Rica and the

Dominican Republic. In exchange they would let me live in Venezuela under an assumed name and organize other terrorists' actions elsewhere. They wanted me to include Panama and Guyana.

"I said emphatically, no. I agreed to include Costa Rica, but I didn't want to include Panama because it is a [leftist] dictatorship. And I didn't want to include Guyana. We had already attacked Guyana. The CORU already blew up the Guyana embassy in Trinidad.

"Finally they said, 'All right. We'll just include the three countries. You can do what you want in all the others.' They offered me use of weapons, but I refused, saying that we already had all that we could use. They offered me bodyguards from the DISIP [the secret police], but I didn't need those either. They gave me an identification card from the DISIP which I took—I think it was in the name of Sucre. I was always traveling around the countryside with a great many bodyguards and lots of weap-

Bosch's secret pact with Venezuela "was going perfectly well. In fact, I was supposed to meet with President Perez on October 10, but then the plane blew up on the 6th and all the trouble started"

ons. If I got stopped, I would just show my secret-police card and I wouldn't have any problems."

So Bosch had found in Venezuela a seemingly secure base for his terrorist activities. Then, within a two-week period last fall, two terrorist incidents put the Cuban exiles on the front pages—and landed Bosch in jail. The first was the September 21 assassination in Washington, D.C., of Chilean exile leader Orlando Letelier, whose car blew up as he drove past the Chilean embassy in Sheridan Circle. Cuban exiles were immediately suspected of carrying out the crime as hit men for the Chilean junta.

The second was the October 6 explosion in flight of a Cuban airline jet shortly after takeoff from Barbados. All 73 persons aboard were killed. The next day, two Cuban exiles, Hernan Ricardo and Freddy Lugo, were arrested in Trinidad. According to secret court documents obtained by *New Times*, they confessed to planting a bomb in the plane—and implicated Orlando Bosch [see the

box on page 52].

Up till that point, Bosch told me, "the pact [with Venezuela] was going perfectly well. In fact, I was supposed to meet with President Perez on October 10, but then the plane blew up on the 6th and all the trouble started. I had a lot of conversations with Garcia. He lived in the Anauco Hilton also. I asked him what should I do and he said, 'Nothing is going to happen, just stay quiet. Don't worry, everything is going to be nice.'

"Then one day he calls me up and says, 'The president wants you to stay here [at the police headquarters]. No problem. You'll be safe.' But I have been under 'protective custody' for seven months now, and the president has said on television that I was a member of the CIA and trying to destabilize his government."

Bosch claims that Orlando Garcia has told him to "sit tight, everything will be all right. We will let you go as soon as the publicity blows over." But Bosch is not sure he believes him, and is getting very impatient. He spoke to me with extreme bitterness about "the betrayal of the Cuban people" by the Venezuelans who had so recently befriended him. He is even willing to entertain charges that Venezuela set him up from the day he was invited to live there. Could his old archenemy Morales have cleverly gotten even in this way?

"Some of my friends said that they called me back deliberately to betray me. I don't know. It is possible."

In any case, Bosch has decided to resume the offensive. "When I was brought to the court the last time, reporters crowded around me, but I didn't say anything. They asked me if I had a DIS-IP card. I denied it, but I can't keep quiet anymore.

"We're pushed up against the wall by [President] Perez. We're going to accuse him of betraying us. A traitor to democracy, a traitor to the Cubans, and also a traitor to the American cause. I am going to declare war on the Venezuelan government in the name of the Cuban cause. I don't care that I am sitting in jail. Perez is a traitor. He was making a pact with Castro at the same time that he was making a pact with us.

"If they want to put me on trial, they will also have to accuse the minister of the interior, the DISIP director and the president. These people conspired with me. They should be put in jail as well.

"Did you see the Viasa [Venezuelan Airline] office blown up in Puerto Rico yesterday? My Cubans blew it up, but nobody is going to take credit for it.

"The bus has left with the dogs": How they blew up the Cuban plane

The following account of the bombing of the Cubana Airline jet is based on secret Venezuelan court documents. Most of the information comes from the confessions, since repudiated, of the men charged with the crime.

Hernan Ricardo, 22, had been working at the private detective office of Luis Posada in Caracas for about a year when, on September 10, 1976, Posada introduced him to a "Mr. Panyagua." Posada assigned Ricardo to help "Mr. Panyagua" get around, as he was a stranger in the country. After a few days of helping "Mr. Panyagua," Ricardo realized that he was really Orlando Bosch, "the maximum leader of the Cuban people."

On the night of October 5, Ricardo, Bosch and Freddy Lugo, 25, met at a Cuban exile meeting. At midnight that same day, Ricardo and Lugo flew to Trinidad aboard a Pan American flight. They stayed overnight and the next morning inquired about Cubana Airline flight 455, stopping in Barbados en route to Cuba. The clerk told them that the Cuban plane had been delayed, but that there was another flight to Barbados leaving immediately. Ricardo protested, but had trouble getting his message across since his English was not very good.

Standing behind Ricardo in line were a few members of Cuba's championship fencing team, who were returning home after an international tour. One of the fencers, also booked on Cubana flight 455, translated for Ricardo. "He says that he doesn't want to go on an earlier flight. He only wants to travel on Cubana 455 and he's willing to wait until it's ready to go."

Lugo and Ricardo each checked a bag, and Lugo carried with him a dark alligator shoulder bag with two cameras and a tube of Colgate toothpaste in it. With 16 Cuban fencers, 6 medical students from South America, 5 Koreans and 45 other, mostly Cuban, passengers and crew, Lugo and Ricardo finally got on the plane. About half-way through the 20-minute flight, Ricardo got up to go to the bathroom to plant the explosive.

The bomb made a big bulge in Ricardo's pocket and he was very nervous.

It took only a few minutes in the toilet, but then Ricardo found he couldn't get out. He panicked and started banging on the door. The stewardess tried to open the door from the outside, but she couldn't. She called one of the pilots from the cockpit who kicked at it three times with his foot. Finally the door opened and Ricardo stumbled out. By the time he got back to his seat he was drenched in sweat and appeared very nervous. For the rest of the flight Ricardo held a newspaper in front of his face.

They got off the plane in Barbados, collected their luggage, and made their way to the Hotel Village. At one point in the cab ride Ricardo told the driver to stop, jumped out and looked up at a passing plane. He was very agitated and nervous.

Lugo described the scene ten minutes later as follows. "The people in the streets were very agitated and pointing up to the sky, saying that a plane had fallen. Ricardo said that we were in big trouble because we had traveled on false passports. At the hotel Ricardo told me to take the bags up to the room while he registered in a false name. He said he was calling Venezuela for advice."

He had difficulty getting through. One call that he did get through was to his girlfriend, Marines Vegas. She testified that he gave her a number and told her to get the following message to Luis or Gustavo:

"Tell them I am in a desperate situation and that they should send someone quick. That this is a question of life or death and that 'the bus has left with the dogs.' Tell them that I threw away the phone numbers."

Ricardo got a phone call back from Caracas during which Lugo quotes him as saying, "What's happening, Luis? I have a lot of problems. I don't know what to do. The bug has fallen into the water. Tell this to Panyagua [Bosch]."

Just as he put down the phone Ricardo saw someone staring at him and ran up to the room in a panic. Lugo says Ricardo told him, "Let's get out of here right away. The man who stared at me in the lobby is a G-2 [agent of Castro's secret police]."

"We took a cab to the docks," Lugo said, "and Ricardo threw something in the water. Then he said, 'We should get the first plane out of

here, no matter where.'"

They caught a plane to Trinidad, leaving their bags in the hotel room in Barbados. On the plane Ricardo buried his head in his hands and said to Lugo, "Shit, Lugo! I'm desperate and I feel like crying. I have never killed anyone before."

At the Holiday Inn in Trinidad, Ricardo called Bosch, who told him, "Friend, we have to see each other in Caracas. You never should explode a bomb while a plane is in the air."

Meanwhile, the Barbados cab driver, struck by Ricardo's erratic behavior, had contacted the police. They tracked Ricardo and Lugo to Trinidad. In their hotel room the police found two phone books containing many different addresses, including those of Orlando Bosch, Luis Posada and Joseph Leo, an FBI legal attache in the United States embassy in Caracas.

The Trinidad police separated Lugo and Ricardo and during the questioning that followed over the next few days—the police threatened to send them back to Cuba unless they talked—they both confessed. Ricardo told Police Chief Denis Elliott Randwar that he had planted the bomb on the airplane. He also said, "I am a member of a secret organization, the CORU or CONDOR, and the chief of this organization is Orlando Bosch." Ricardo added that he "was a CIA agent of the grade B-1" and that he had been recruited in 1971. He said that he had received training in the manufacturing of bombs, the handling of firearms and photography by the CIA.

Before a number of Trinidad policemen he drew a picture of the bomb and described the plastic explosive that had been used. He said he kept the "pencil" detonator in the tube of Colgate toothpaste. Different colored chemical pencils could trigger an explosion in 8 minutes, 15 minutes, 2 hours, 8 hours or 24 hours, he said. He said he had been paid \$25,000 to plant the bomb.

On October 20, after signing his confessions, Ricardo tried to kill himself by slashing his wrist with a razor, but he was taken to the hospital and survived.

At funeral services for those killed on the plane, Fidel Castro charged that the CIA was directly responsible for the bombing. As a result, he terminated the hijacking agreement Cuba had signed with the United States.

This is just a message. There will be a couple of messages more."

I asked him if there was going to be a kidnapping attempt against Venezuelan diplomats. (An FBI informant reported a plan to kidnap the Venezuelan ambassador to the United Nations in March. The ambassador was informed and surrounded with extra security.) Bosch replied: "There are going to be a lot of things after I declare war. This is going to be a tremendous risk for me because I'll still be in jail. After the war declaration there are going to be a lot of bombings, a lot of kidnappings, a lot of shootings. We have to attack everything except their planes in the air. Their offices on land, yes."

And what about the spectacular crimes that put the Cuban exiles in the spotlight?

Cuban government officials have told recent American visitors that Orlando Bosch was enlisted and paid by the Chilean junta to carry out the Letelier assassination. Bosch, they claim, par-

Bosch concedes that the Cuban exiles discussed Orlando Letelier. "Chilean officials told me many times when I lived there that they wanted him dead"

celed out the money to other members of CORU who actually blew up Letelier. Bosch concedes that the Cuban exiles "discussed Orlando Letelier at [the Bonaio] meeting, and the fact that [Letelier's] campaign [to discredit the junta abroad] was bothering some of our friends in Chile. Chilean officials told me many times when I lived there that they wanted him dead." But Bosch denied knowing anything about the Letelier assassination. "Even if I did know," he added, "I wouldn't tell anyone. I'm not a stool pigeon or an informer."

According to a confidential intelligence report obtained by *New Times*, however, Bosch was not so reticent about the Letelier case when questioned by Venezuelan authorities shortly after his arrest. The report states that Bosch told Rivas Vasquez, second in command of DISIP, that, while he had nothing to do with the Letelier assassination, "the Novo brothers are directly involved."

Guillermo and Ignacio Novo are among the most militant and activist Cu-

ban exile leaders in the United States. They were arrested in 1964 for firing a bazooka at the United Nations while Che Guevara was speaking there, but charges were dropped because they were not read their rights before they confessed. Guillermo Novo (or Bill, as he is known at the Chevrolet dealership in Union City, New Jersey, where he is a new-car sales manager) was sentenced to five years in jail in 1971 for possession of explosives. He served six months, and was given probation for five years. Under the terms of his parole he was not allowed to leave New Jersey. But Bosch told me of two foreign trips Bill Novo took—the first to Curacao and Chile, the second to Bonaio. Bill Novo could be sent back to jail for these trips in violation of parole—which he denies making.

Bosch's story to Vasquez about the Novos' involvement in the Letelier murder correlated with a story that had been told to authorities by an FBI informant in Washington. (Contrary to reports in most American papers, no U.S. official has been allowed by the Venezuelan government to see Bosch.) On the basis of these two leads Eugene Propper, the Assistant U.S. Attorney in charge of the Letelier investigation, has called about ten Cuban exile leaders before a Washington grand jury. Bill Novo was called before the Letelier grand jury twice, and twice took the Fifth Amendment. The government has now begun offering limited immunity to some of the other Cuban exiles, hoping to force them to talk. Recently a friend of Bill Novo's was jailed after refusing to testify before the grand jury about Novo's travels to Curacao.

As for Bosch, his future is unclear. Venezuelan legal experts say the likelihood of convicting him in the airplane explosion case is not great. Ricardo and Lugo, the chief potential witnesses against him, have repudiated their confessions after being deported to Venezuela from Trinidad. In any case, confessions made in Trinidad are not admissible in Venezuelan courtrooms. The government has tapes of Ricardo's telephone calls to Venezuela, but these, too, are inadmissible, since they were not obtained legally. It is thus entirely possible that Bosch will be released.

If that happens, he will surely slip again into the violent, murky world where desperate men are alternately used and betrayed by the secret agencies of governments. It is a far cry from the life of a prosperous pediatrician, a family man, a pillar of his community. But "some of us," as he told me, "have other roles to play." ●

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