

LATIN AMERICA

Cuban exile bombs mark DC meeting

WASHINGTON—The two powerful explosions that rocked this already tense city on the eve of the Panama Canal Treaty ceremonies were the latest in a series of attacks by a terrorist network of CIA-trained anti-Castro Cubans operating out of Miami and other cities in the U.S. and abroad. The exile terrorists showed that they could operate with ease even when security forces had been quadrupled for the largest gathering of heads of state here since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

One bomb, set off in an alley behind the Soviet Aeroflot building, was so powerful that it sucked out five floors of windows in a hotel across the street by its vacuum effect. The second bomb was set off in a concrete flower pedestal maintained by the city across the street from the Pan American Union building, a little more than a block from the White House. Both blasts went off around 2:30 a.m. September 7, miraculously injuring no one.

The first group claiming credit for the bombings identified itself as the "Pedro Luis Boitel Commando Group," a band that surfaced in Miami in May with the bombing of a charter airline service seeking to establish direct air links to Havana. The group also took credit for the bombing of a Venezuelan airliner at Miami International airport. Pedro Boitel, once a comrade of Fidel Castro, was imprisoned after the Cuban Revolution and soon became an exile martyr for leading hunger strikes, the last of which led to his death in 1974. The attack on the airliner is thought to have been arranged by the group to show its displeasure with the Venezuelan government, which has been holding in jail Dr. Orlando Bosch, leader of another terrorist organization, which sabotaged a

During the Canal treaty meeting, Cuban exiles protested the thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations. Afterwards, they sought reassurances from Pinochet, their closest ally.

Cuban airlines flight last October, killing all 73 persons aboard in a mid-air explosion.

The second group to thump its chest for the Washington bombings called itself "El Condor," which is the nickname for terrorist leader Rolando Otero, now in jail in Miami for six bombings in a single night in that city. Both groups said they set off the bombs in Washington last week as a symbol of their resistance to any rapprochement between the U.S. and Cuba.

The two newest terrorist groups are the latest reincarnation of the Cuban exile armies built by the CIA for a clandestine war against Fidel Castro that began with the Bay of Pigs invasion and continued with numerous assassination attempts and sabotage operations on the island over the next decade.

The Cuban terrorist gangs are thought to number no more than some 200 highly dedicated and skilled operators who have been brave enough to proclaim on a C.B.S. news documentary that they will kill anyone whom they consider a threat to their goal of blocking any steps towards normalization of relations between Havana and Washington. Some close observers of the gangs think they are growing stronger as the American government fails to exterminate them.

Others think that at least one gang, the Cuban Nationalist Movement which operates out of Union City, New Jersey, has been seriously weakened by the investigation of the murder of Orlando Letelier, which has pinpointed the gang's leaders as prime suspects in the attack that also took the life of an American colleague, Ronni Karpen Moffitt.

Pinochet connection.

Since the U.S. has begun to cut back its support of the terrorists, the Cuban exiles have found increasing hospitality from the anti-Communist military dictators in Latin America. They have looked in particular to Chile's General Augusto Pinochet. Cuban Orlando Bosch admitted in an interview last spring that, beginning in 1974 he was able to operate from bases in Chile and travel with a Chilean passport. Since the assassination of Letelier, the exiles have become increasingly anxious that Pinochet might be pulling back from his support of terrorist activities to improve his relations with President Carter.

Pinochet had scheduled a stop in Miami on his way back home from the Panama Canal Treaty ceremonies last week as a gesture of support for their cause. According to Miami exile sources contacted by *In These Times*, however,

the exiles wanted more than a gesture.

Three weeks ago, the leaders of Brigade 2506 sent Pinochet a message outlining the conditions for a Miami meeting, hand carried by Consul General Hector Duran from Miami to Santiago. The letter, a copy of which has been obtained by *ITT*, set down five conditions for a meeting, which was to be held aboard Pinochet's jetliner at Miami International Airport.

First, the Brigade wanted Pinochet to proclaim "the willingness of the government of Chile to support the fight against the tyranny of Fidel Castro . . ." Secondly, the Brigade wanted to know "the ways and means of the support of Chile in the fight . . ." The third condition demanded by the Brigade was "consideration of the necessary means to implement this fight . . ." They also wanted to know what they would get in return for their work, or, as it was put, "the aspirations of the government of Chile in exchange for its support and help" against Castro. And finally, the Brigade wanted Pinochet to sign "a joint statement . . . giving details of the talks and taking international responsibility" for the arrangements between them. The letter was signed by 2506 President Roberto Carballo.

According to one Miami source close to the Brigade, the terrorists had insisted on the last condition because of their fears that Pinochet had been pulling back. But the meeting was not held as scheduled. A Miami source with first hand knowledge of planning for the meeting suggested that Pinochet had been willing to make a ceremonial stopover in Miami, so that the exiles could "wave flags at the airport and Pinochet could tell them to keep the faith, but that was not enough for the exiles." They apparently wanted a "treaty."

Mexico doesn't show in protest of treaty

Despite official denials and a transparent excuse, it is clear that President Jose Lopez Portillo stayed away from the signing of the Panama Canal treaty in Washington Sept. 7 for reasons for state. Foreign minister Santiago Roel, who went to Washington simply as an observer, admitted as much on leaving Mexico City by saying that he had been charged with "a difficult mission." He said that any joint declaration, which President Carter and General Torrijos hope to extract from the assembled Presidents, "could be interpreted as a violation of the principle of non-intervention."

He also mentioned the fact that the government did not relish the idea of supping with the military dictators of the Southern Cone. Newspapers in Mexico have taken Roel's remarks a stage further. Manuel Buendia, writing in *El Sol*, said the joint communique would purport to demonstrate that "Latin American governments ratify with their applause the terms of the new treaty, and accept it as a useful and positive precedent in their relations with the great power of the north."

This, said Buendia, would greatly strengthen the position of the U.S., "commercially, politically and militarily." But Mexico has not been and will not be part of the chorus of applause. Buendia listed three objections to the treaty: it places severe and injurious restrictions on the exercise of Panamanian sovereignty over its own territory; it grants the U.S. the right to safeguard its interests in the Canal in perpetuity, by force if necessary; and it allows it to build a new canal in Panama if it wishes.

Buendia's account of the matter is

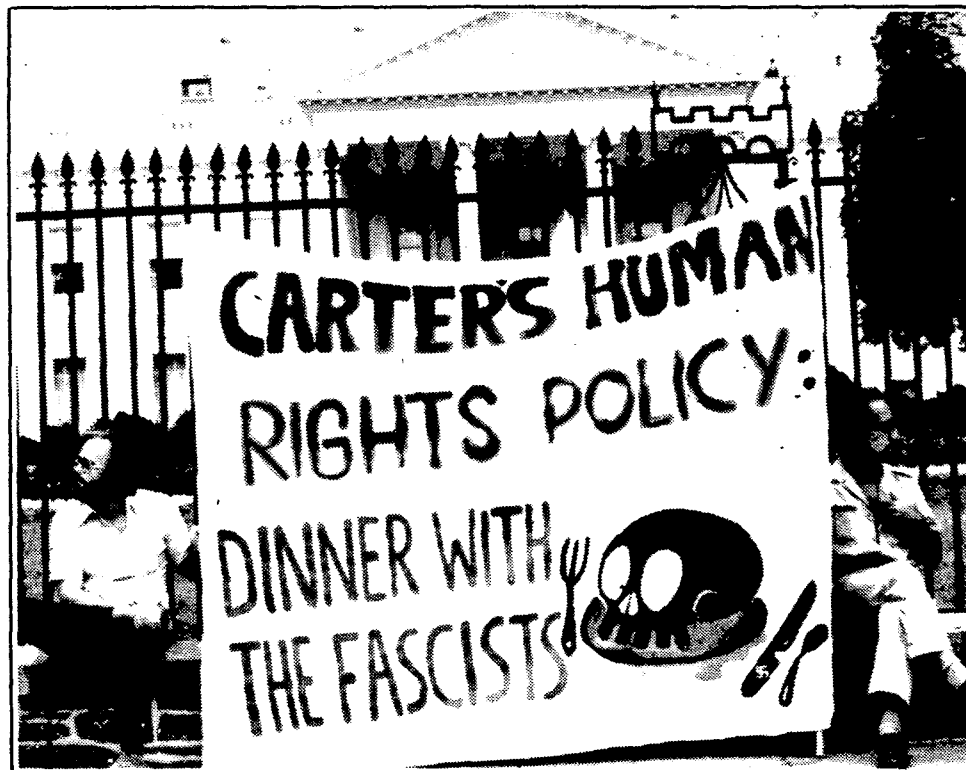
One Mexican journalist charged that the Canal treaty strengthens the U.S. "commercially, politically, and militarily."

probably not far from the mark. Lopez Portillo was considerably less enthusiastic than his fellow Presidents in Bogota, where Torrijos outlined the proposed agreements. In fact, all the Presidents except Carlos Andres Perez felt Torrijos had given too much away in agreeing to give the U.S. first option on the construction of a sea-level canal.

The President's decision not to go to Washington is well calculated and should not cost Mexico much, if anything, in its dealings with Washington. It cannot be used by the right in the U.S. as an argument against the treaty. In fact, the Mexicans are making it quite clear that they would like to see a more radical treaty. This might assist the passage of the actual treaty through the U.S. Senate.

Internally, the gesture will be appreciated as another symbol of Mexican independence from the U.S., and repudiation of the military regimes of the Southern Cone. Lopez Portillo argues that it is more useful to stay at home minding the shop than to go to Washington at President Carter's bidding. In that sense, his excuse that he has to attend important budget meetings is no less than the truth.

—Latin America Political Report



Two thousand demonstrate against Carter dinner with dictators

While President Carter dined at the White House September 7 with some 25 Latin American dictators and high government officials following Panama Canal treaty ceremonies, some 2,000 people gathered outside for a demonstration. The demand, as expressed by one speaker: "We want those people out of the White House, but more, we want them out of our Americas."

"The U.S. government," said a member of Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH), "would very much like to create the impression that these governments represent their people, to legitimize some of the repressive regimes of Latin America which have been under severe criticism."

Representatives of governments of the Americas were officially invited to the U.S. for the signing of the Panama Canal treaties, and constituted, in Carter's words, "the largest group of heads of state ever assembled" in the Pan American Union building in Washington, D.C.

Carter's press representatives defended the President's personal meeting with the string of dictators and high government officials, saying he intended to "push" them on the human rights issue.

"They don't respond to abstract and moral concern," said the NICH member, "but to mass pressure on an international scale."

—Liberation News Service

The Labour Party has abandoned socialist politics in favor of doing what is necessary to get by for another month. And the vision of a socialist commonwealth has been lost to the reality of race conflict, class bitterness, and ideological nihilism.

LETTER FROM BRITAIN

By Martin A. Jackson

SEARCHED FOR BOMBS AT THE British Museum; handbags and packages carefully inspected at the Jubilee Exhibit in Hyde Park; a full scale body search at Heathrow Airport on the way to Ireland. London is under attack, or so it seems to the visitor who isn't used to such high-powered security. But why are the British so nervous and jittery this summer?

It's not from the IRA or the PLO. Britain is frightened by a spreading notion that some corner has been turned, that the old ways will not be restored, no matter what happens to the pound or the balance of payments. British society is under bone-racking pressures and is reacting in the normal way for established social orders—it is pulling down the hatch covers and fighting to keep the old patterns intact. It won't work, I'm afraid.

Politics in Britain today consist of doing what is necessary to get by for another month. In a country where muddling through is cherished as a national talent, the Labour Party and James Callaghan have made it an ideology.

Callaghan and his ministers have erected a trembling structure of political survival, built on two main supports: North Sea oil and the social contract. The rivers of petroleum from the North Sea are supposed to rebuild the British economy and provide support for the tattered pound; the social contract is designed to ensure labor peace and a ceiling on inflation.

Beyond budgets and complex Treasury figures, the government offer little; certainly they offer none of the dreams of socialism or reform that once moved British voters. The compulsive interest in finances is, perhaps, understandable

in a country where trade balances and currency fluctuations have played havoc with living standards. But there is the unsettling feeling as one walks through London that this old, and in many ways admirable, society can't be patched together with oil and accounting tricks.

Dying social contract.

The trade unions never really accepted the social contract, which bound them not to strike and the government not to slash benefits or allow prices to soar too high. Under the gun a year ago, with the prospect of a Conservative government that would ravage social services, the Trades Union Congress accepted the idea of a "contract" to give the Labour ministry a breathing space. But it was an unhappy and forced agreement from the start, bitterly resented by the miners and other powerful unions.

By July 1977 the social contract was near death despite Callaghan's pleading and warnings. Ironically, it was the medical profession, hardly a band of militants, that became the cutting edge of the union movement this time. Solemnly passing resolutions, British doctors have promised to strike Britain's health services in the Fall unless they get solid pay increases beyond the 10 percent limit that Callaghan is committed to preserving. The miners, transport workers and newspapermen are watching carefully for cracks in the pay ceilings, while Callaghan for his part has been proclaiming the end of civilization if the contract is breached.

"It is not politics that matters here," he said on August 1, "it is what is going to happen to Britain . . . Are we going to be able to live in the world? The fate of Britain is at stake." The unions and their leadership listen to these warnings in stony silence, still not prepared to vio-

late the contract and clash openly with a Labour government, as they once clashed with Heath and the Conservatives. But disenchantment with Callaghan runs deep; it would take only a small spark to generate a trade union conflagration.

Tories smell blood.

Perhaps the unions are held in check by the knowledge that if they topple the present Labour ministry, the replacement will be Margaret Thatcher and her Conservatives, beside whom the current government would seem positively benevolent. The Tories smell blood as Callaghan flounders through a season of racial trouble and labor unease—several votes of confidence in Parliament have been saved for Labour only with the help of a jerry-built alliance with the vestigial Liberal Party in Commons.

But Thatcher has come off well also; she won great acclaim for her performance toward the end of the session in August, when she flayed the Callaghan government in a speech that established her as a genuine political power and not an oddity.

Indeed, Thatcher has become a far more interesting political figure than almost anyone else in Britain today. She proclaims without shame her belief in the moral value of capitalism and in self-interest as a motive force in the economy. In the kind of speeches that have nearly disappeared from national politics, she discusses large issues and probes the usually unexamined beliefs that govern the major parties. The left's response has been uncoordinated and generally ineffective; none of the major voices on the left have countered her arguments with equal skill or apparent reasonableness.

Socialism, in fact, can find few defen-