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## U.S. and Chile Conspired to Blame Anti-Reds in Letelier Assassination

*Why would the U.S. and Chile make a secret deal to let the blame for killing a communist fall on anti-communist Cubans?*

EXCLUSIVE TO SPOTLIGHT  
By Walter Riley

For more than four years, the Establishment press, orchestrated by previously unknown collaboration between the governments of Chile and the U.S., has made you believe that anti-communist Cubans killed a pro-communist ex-diplomat.

The secret contract to suppress evidence was uncovered during the current retrial of two Cuban patriots charged with the September 21, 1976 murder of Chile's former ambassador to the U.S., Orlando Letelier.

Letelier had been living in exile in the U.S. after the death of Chile's communist dictator, Salvadore Allende. Letelier had been strongly pro-communist and his close collaboration with Cuba's Fidel Castro became known shortly after a bomb exploded and killed Letelier in his car (SPOTLIGHT, Feb. 28, 1977).

The secret agreement between the two governments came to light when attorneys for the two defendants, Cuban exiles Guillermo Novo and Alvin Ross, cross-examined federal witness Michael Vernon Townley.

The trial had continued for several days when on May 25, a juror, Michael Lyles, was excused because of outside "threats," according to the court. The trial continued with an alternate juror. The excused juror had, because of his facial expressions, been viewed by both sides as likely to vote for acquittal. Since only one strong-willed juror is necessary to force acquittal or at least a "hung jury," the motives of whoever threatened the excused juror are obvious; somebody wants a conviction.

Townley, the prosecution witness who reluctantly revealed the secret cover-up deal, had already pleaded guilty to the same murder in exchange for a sentence limited to a maximum of 40 months to 10 years and other considerations.

Townley confessed to having manufactured the bomb and planting it in the car, where it was set off by remote control. Townley denies having actually set off the bomb and maintains that he does not know who did.

It was when Townley refused to say



Defense attorneys Paul A. Goldberger and Lawrence A. Dubin.

where he obtained 10 bomb-detonation devices, and was ready to take the Fifth Amendment, that he let slip the point that, under "the agreement" between the U.S. and Chile, he was immune to



Defendants Alvin Ross and Guillermo Novo outside courtroom.

SPOTLIGHT PHOTO

Other evidence linking the Soviet KGB and Cuba's Fidel Castro to the murder of Letelier has also been suppressed, informed sources said. Some evidence has been destroyed by the CIA and Justice Department, according to an official source close to the investigation.

### COLLABORATE IN WITCH-HUNT

So why would Chile, after establishing a pro-American government after its period of communism under Allende, want to frame anti-communist Cubans for the murder of a known communist?

The U.S. government seemed to enjoy having anti-Castro Cubans blamed for Letelier's death; former Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) and the late Sen. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.) enthusiastically assailed the "right-wing" Cuban patriots in ceremonies eulogizing Letelier. The new government in Chile wanted to please the U.S. government and so collaborated, in the opinion of sources from both countries.

It's not unusual for communists to kill communists when the victim's value as a "martyr" exceeds his worth in life, investigation sources say. So, for communists to kill Letelier and blame Cuban patriots comes as no surprise.

the questions. (Since his "plea-bargain," Townley was in no further jeopardy and presumably the Fifth Amendment was not applicable).

Lawrence Dubin, attorney for defendant Ross, demanded to know all about the "secret agreement" that prevented him from asking questions that could discredit the government witness.

Reluctantly, the government produced a copy of an agreement dated April 7, 1978, signed by Chile's minister of the interior and by Earl Silbert, then-U.S. attorney. Silbert had been given permission by the State Department to execute the document on behalf of the U.S., according to the prosecution. Copies of the document have not been made public, but some of the contents were disclosed in court arguments outside the jury's hearing.

Chile agreed to return Townley, a resident of that nation, to the U.S. if no inquiries would be made into a similar bombing in Argentina or any Townley connections with communist Cuba. It was apparent, from testimony, that if any information about Townley's life in Chile should emerge by chance, it would not be published, and all records would be turned over to the Chilean government under the agreement.



Leaving a Washington courtroom last year are relatives of the three Cubans convicted in the Orlando Letelier bombing murder. From left are: Anna Pleyva Novo, sister of the two Novo brothers; Lucy Ross, wife of one of the defendants and Sylvia Novo, wife of Ignacio.

UPI PHOTO



MICHAEL TOWNLEY