

The Lord of the Slums Is Not a Bad Guy, by Rinker Buck
For Very Young Dancers: A Ballet-School Guide

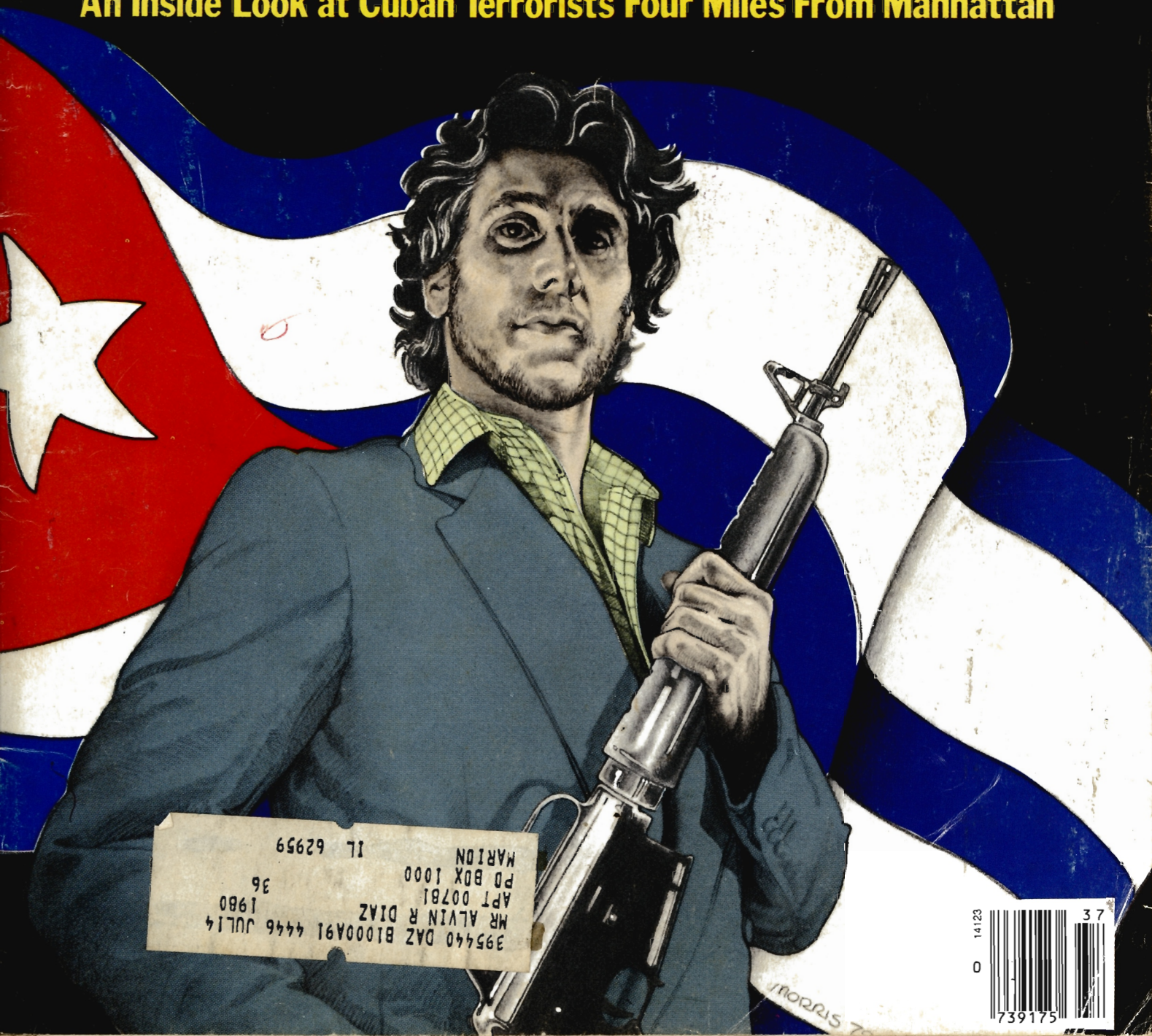
ONE DOLLAR

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AN ARMY IN EXILE

An Inside Look at Cuban Terrorists Four Miles From Manhattan



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An Army In Exile

By Jeff Stein

"...When Castro comes, he'll find right-wing Cuban terrorists just across the Hudson..."



Headquarters: Home of the CNM.

Click. That is the sound of terror. It usually comes late at night, and sometimes there will be a voice before the click. It will say, as it did one night late in 1975, "Are you the wife of Orlando Letelier?"

"Yes, I am," she sleepily answered. "No. You are his widow."

Click. On the morning of September 21, 1976, Orlando Letelier, who held several positions under the Marxist Chilean government of Salvador Allende, was blown up in his car as he drove through rush-hour traffic along Embassy Row in Washington, D.C. An American col-

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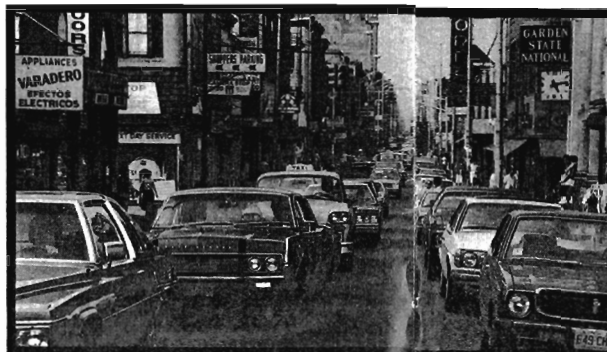
league, Ronni Moffitt, also died in the attack.

Eulalio Negrin heard the clicks too. Since last fall, Negrin, director of his privately run social-service agency for Cuban refugees in Union City, New Jersey, had been getting death threats. He had recently gone to Havana at the invitation of Fidel Castro to get information on the relatives of families in his area. On March 25, his office was demolished by a bomb.

Twenty-six-year-old Carlos Muniz operated a travel agency in San Juan authorized by the Castro government to schedule visits to Cuba by exile families, an arrangement which began last fall. He began receiving the calls. Just before sunset on April 28, as he drove across town in his old Volvo, a car with three men in it pulled up alongside him. One of them had a .45 automatic and emptied it into his face. He died the next day.

The Letelier assassination was carried out by members of a fascist New Jersey-based group known as the "Cuban Nationalist Movement." Credit for the bombing of Negrin's office was claimed by a group which called itself "Omega 7." The Muniz murder was claimed by a group calling itself "Cero," or, in its English-language equivalent, "Zero." Federal officials, following the path of Cuban-exile terrorism over the past three years, believe that the membership of Omega 7, Cero, and the Cuban Nationalist Movement are one and the same.

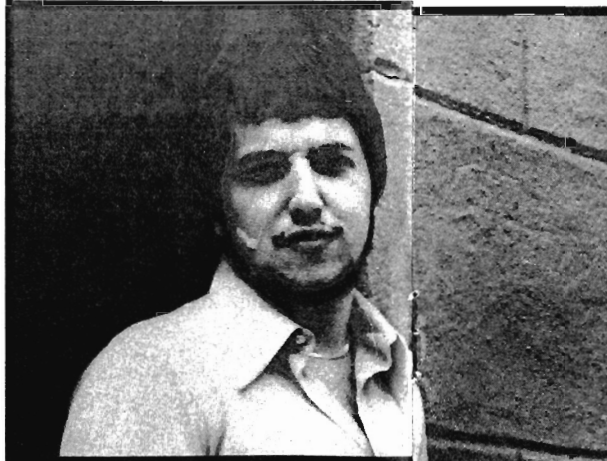
Such terrorism, continuing well into its second decade, upholds many of the same grim traditions it did during its Bay of Pigs and Watergate days. As in the past, government officials refuse to speak out against the terrorists in the Cuban communities, in many cases



Bergenline Avenue: Center of the new terrorism.



The writing on the wall: "Cuba Before All."



Cold-war cowboy: CNM chief Armando Santana.



The Lady Mayor: Julia Valdivia and husband Luis, the Cuban exiles' link with local government.

“...‘It was Capone-style,’ an elderly man said. ‘They came back the next day and smashed my windows. I had to sell my shop’...”

Reyes remembers a run-in with other Cuban exiles. One evening, he related in an interview, he drove from his house. “One car pulled up behind me, another ahead of me. I couldn’t see who they were. They locked me in at a very slow pace for a few minutes before finally pulling away. It was very frightening.” All during this period, there were anonymous death threats against Reyes and pledges to blow up the church school if he didn’t get out of town. In June he was transferred to Newark, where there are few, if any, Cuban exiles.

It was a normal, routine transfer, the diocese reported in a letter made public to dispel the widely held belief that Reyes had been run out of town. “Father Reyes’s work in Elizabeth had come to an end.” At his new post in Newark, Reyes, a quiet, reflective 36-year-old man, smiles at that. “An end?” he says softly, with a smile. “It had just begun.”

Other bullying acts attributed to CNM members are less well documented. People will say *what* happened but not specifically *who* was involved. On the day the Letelier trial opened in Washington last January, for example, Cubans moved down Bergenline Avenue, demanding that shopkeepers close their doors for the day in tribute to the CNM members on trial.

“It was Capone-style,” one elderly man recounted one night not long ago in his home. His wife nervously peeked through the curtains from time to time as her husband talked. “They put their stickers on my store window. I told them they had no right. They came back the next day and smashed my window. They went everywhere down Bergenline Avenue. Later,” he said, showing his visitor to the door, “I sold my shop.”

It is widely reported by shopkeepers on the avenues that “the *nacionalistas*,” members of the CNM—never identified by name—raise money for their activities through extortion. On a recent Friday evening outside a newspaper store on the avenue, bundles of one of the Cuban-exile tabloids were being dropped off. An elderly man on the sidewalk stopped talking while the papers were delivered inside. The proprietor of the store stood behind his counter, silently watching. When the men who delivered the papers drove away, he shook his head with an expression of sadness and contempt and

then moved to stack them in the corner.

“*Los nacionalistas* come and demand pay money,” the old man on the sidewalk said, rubbing a thumb and finger together. “If no give, they smash in window. This window smash three times.” There was tape on the window. “These papers, just propaganda.” Are people scared of them? “Yes, people scared,” he said.

On March 25, three bombs rocked the New Jersey-New York metropolitan area, including the one that blew up Negrin’s New Jersey Cuban Program office in Weehawken. Another exploded outside the El Español pharmacy on a back street in Union City, within view of Manhattan’s skyscrapers. Another went off in a suitcase at Kennedy Airport just before it was loaded onto a transcontinental TWA jet with 157 passengers scheduled to be aboard. The pharmacy’s crime was to have sent medicine to Cuba. TWA was attacked ostensibly because it charters jets for flights to Cuba.

Though responsibility for all the actions that day was claimed by Omega 7, federal officials suspect they were the responsibility of members of the Cuban Nationalist Movement. A grand jury has brought in six exiles associated with the group for what is called “major case finger printing.” But no one has been indicted.

The exile terrorists represented by Omega 7 are perhaps being presented with their last great challenge. When Fidel Castro invited 75 clergymen, academics, and business representatives from the exile community to Havana last September to inaugurate the process which has come to be known as “the Dialogue,” he initiated a clever, multifaceted ploy.

On the surface, he was signaling an end to the cold war and making the humane gesture of inviting exiles back to visit their long-missed relatives. He also announced the release of several thousand “political prisoners” into the hands of their families here. Beneath these gestures, there were the obvious diplomatic, political, and economic advantages to the strategy. Stymied by the icy attitude in Washington toward his sending troops to Angola and Ethiopia, Castro hoped to win over opinion-makers in the Cuban-exile community here and lessen the acquiescence to terrorism among the thousands of ordinary Cubans who wanted to visit home and relatives. Last but not least, the electric appliances, medicines,

clothes, and cash the exiles brought for relatives in Cuba would help alleviate the continuing hardship due in large measure to the nineteen-year-long U.S. economic blockade of the island.

This détente led the terrorists to present their own ultimatum. “Any Cuban or Puerto Rican,” proclaimed “Commando Cero” in April, “just as any American who travels to Cuba, regardless of his motives, is considered our enemy, and we will be forced to deal with them as we did Muniz. This has been a warning that we hope reaches the ears of the persons concerned, since we do not want to continue burying those who in the past were our brothers and comrades in the struggle.”

There have been two more bombings and one attempted bombing since then. At 1 A.M. on the morning of May 19, the Cuban mission in Washington was rocked by a bomb that rattled windows, according to a radio reporter cruising the city half a mile away. On the night of July 26, another bomb went off at the Padron Cigar Factory in Miami, whose owner is a member of the “Group of 75” which visited Havana last fall. The same night, another bomb was left on the doorstep of Carlos Muniz’s old travel agency in Puerto Rico, which had been taken over by a friend who continued to arrange exile trips back home. It failed to explode. Credit for the bombings was claimed by Omega 7.

A visit to any one of the travel agencies which have been authorized by the Castro government to process exile visits to the island, meanwhile, finds clusters of terrified-looking Cubans waiting to go home and see relatives. They know that Commando Cero has put them on a death list for making the trip, but they are going anyway, at a rate of 12,000 a month. “They are so nervous sometimes,” says Vicente Dopico, who runs Cuba Travel in Miami’s Little Havana, “that they forget their names or papers. They come here in secret.” The anxiety, fear, and heartache for relatives overflow when they finally touch down in Havana, Dopico says. “They begin to cry.”

Yet some local officials continue to trumpet the cold-war postures of the most militant exile groups. In the Union City area, for example, more than a dozen virulently anti-Castro tabloids are published which condemn “the Dialogue” and repeatedly charge

“...Once funded by the CIA, Cuban exiles have found a new, if temporary, backer—a member of the Unification Church...”

that the Letelier case was a frame-up engineered by the Carter administration to wreck the exile movement and embrace Fidel Castro.

Some of the papers actually receive city funding. An examination of municipal expenditures in Union City shows that one paper alone in just the past eighteen months has received the lion's share of some \$28,000 doled out to a handful of the papers through various city coffers in the form of advertising. *Avance*, published by Rene Avila, a close political ally, according to City Hall sources, of Mayor William Musto, received over \$20,000 worth of advertising. Another little weekly tabloid, *Guerra*, the house organ of the Association of Bay of Pigs Veterans (also known as Brigade 2506), received about \$3,000 in city funds in 1978 and so far in 1979.

A key to understanding this relationship can be found in an office in City Hall downstairs from Mayor William Musto. On a recent weekday morning, it was clogged with peasantlike Cuban exiles. They had come to see Mrs. Julia Valdivia, officially a mayor's aide, a member of the school board, and, unofficially, she assents on the telephone, “head of Hispanic affairs in Union City.” To the exile press, she is simply “La Alcaldesa”—“the Lady Mayor.”

A bleached-blond, abrupt Cuban woman in her late forties, Julia Valdivia came to Union City with her husband in the mid-1950s, before Castro took power. A large portrait of her hangs behind the desk. As she talks to a visitor, her husband, Luis, fingerprints the exiles who stream through the office with immigration forms and work-permit cards in hand. He works with her as the city's CETA Spanish-affairs officer at \$11,000 a year. Although the CETA program itself started in 1973, the city created the position for Luis Valdivia just last September. For the previous four years, he worked for the city as a building inspector. The Cubans who visit the Valdivias' office looking for help with their forms could go directly to the Immigration and Naturalization office in Newark, twenty minutes away, but they find it convenient, apparently, to visit the Valdivias and have them do it for them. Another reason may be that Julia Valdivia has the reputation of being a very powerful figure in Union City, a dispenser of favors or a roadblock to those she doesn't like.

“The Cubans call her up for anything, because they don't know any better,” says a local reporter. “Say somebody needs a dog license. They come into Valdivia's office and ask for help. She makes a big deal out of it. ‘Give so-and-so a dog license, I'm sending them over,’ she'll say into the telephone. The poor person thinks he's getting a dog license because Mrs. Valdivia used her influence.”

Mrs. Valdivia's political sentiments seem to run with those of the most extreme anti-Castro groups. On Guillermo Novo, now serving consecutive life sentences for his part in the Letelier murder: “I have known him so many years. He was a friend, and I respected his opinions. He believed in what he was doing, and I respected what he did.” Last year, she appeared at several rallies in the Novo brothers' defense. And of the Omega 7 bombings in Union City, she shrugs: “I don't see any violence to worry about.”

Like a Chicago politician who would pass up a St. Patrick's Day parade at great peril, Julia Valdivia keeps her lines open to the city's practitioners of Santeria, a Cuban form of voodoo. Practiced mostly by poorer, less educated exiles, Santeria is a combination of African animism, Buddhism, and Christianity in which the ritual sacrifice of goats and chickens plays a large part. On special holy days, the police say, they run around town answering emergency calls which often turn out to be about a goat being knifed in a bathtub.

Several Cubans in the community, pointing out that one characteristic of the religion is the belief that one can put on or remove a hex from a person, say that Julia Valdivia is a believer. On her front lawn is a statue of one of the “forbidden saints.” A local detective who works the terrorism beat says: “She's way up there in Santeria and, because of it, could wield a lot of fear over ignorant Cubans.”

“Julia and her husband, Luis,” says a feature story from the Hudson County *Dispatch* of a few years ago, “introduced Senator Musto and his running mate into Cuban circles.” William Musto, who is still a state senator and a member of the Judiciary Committee, is the mayor of Union City, a post he held through the 1960s, lost in 1970, and regained five years ago.

“When Musto lost in 1970,” Julia related in the article, “he came to

know white rice, black beans, and chunks of fried pork for the first time.” By 1977, he had been indicted, along with Julia's brother-in-law Celin Valdivia, a deputy police chief, and a police captain, on charges of conspiracy to protect an illegal gambling operation. A local judge who allegedly had thrown a case for Musto in the past, and who had turned State's evidence in the case, was found one morning last year with a bullet in his head. When the government declined to bring forward another informant it claimed it had, the charges were dropped. The judge's murder remains unsolved.

Julia Valdivia's power in the community may be more perceived than real, but Union City insiders say no one really wants to challenge it—including the mayor. “Musto better pray to all the saints,” says one former City Hall staffer, “that she never turns on him. When that day comes, he'll be through.”

While the new focus on exile activities is on the recent leadership of the Union City Cubans, similar activities continue to thrive in Miami. There, for example, exile Rolando Otero, indicted for bombing no fewer than nine buildings, eight of these during a wild 24-hour spree in 1975, directs his business with the apparent blessing of the city fathers. Convicted on one of those charges, Otero was released on \$15,000 appeal bond in October 1978 and today directs his nonprofit Project Freedom '78, the stated purpose of which is to resettle prison inmates in the community. Prominent on his advisory council is Maurice Ferre, the mayor of Miami. Otero is proud of such cooperation from the local and federal governments. “We have received tax-free status from the IRS,” Otero said during a recent interview in his Miami office, “and we have applied for a \$90,000 grant from the city of Miami. We hope to have a \$500,000 budget our first year.” Local merchants, he added, have been “very generous in extending me credit.”

Feeding the hopes of exile terrorists through the years have been powerful outside interests. First came the CIA, recruiting for the Bay of Pigs, the Congo, and Vietnam. Later came E. Howard Hunt for Nixon's re-election committee. After that, the Chilean secret police. And in 1977 a representative from yet another heavily fi-



The fear: When Eulalio Negrin returned home after a trip to Cuba, terrorists demolished his office with a bomb.

nanced international organization dedicated to fighting world Communism appeared on the scene: a Reverend Jose Casado of Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church.

Over the past two years, it was learned, Casado arranged and paid for buses to transport exiles to the World Anti-Communist League conferences in Washington. Armando Santana also said Casado supplied \$2,000 to the Cuban Nationalist Movement to help pay legal fees for the three members convicted for their parts in the Letelier murder. Casado also picked up the publishing costs for the first three months of this year of *El Cubano Libre*, one of the most right wing of the area's exile tabloids, according to owner-editor Pedro Hernandez. "They came to us a few years ago," Hernandez says of the Moonies, "and offered us help and money. I turned them down because we didn't need the help then. But last January, I called [Casado] up and said, 'Well, you offered help before, and now you can help.'"

The Unification Church's reputation as a worldwide, crusading anti-Communist organization with considerable financial assets was well known in the exile community. A congressional in-

vestigating committee found last October that the Unification Church, with close ties to the South Korean government, including its CIA, carried on a wide range of activities "with the intention of affecting Korean-American relations." Says Mario Ceria, editor of New York's anti-Castro tabloid *Ultima Hora*, "Our partner is now no longer the United States, so we need to look elsewhere. The Moonies may be our new partner."

Whether the Moonies will become a full-fledged partner with the right-wing Cuban exiles is doubtful, given the growing concern over such a relationship's being in the public spotlight. Church officials, after all, deny having a relationship with the exiles. But if they do become partners, or if the exiles find a new backer, despite the occasional arrests of their members, they will move comfortably into their third decade as America's first and only home-grown international terrorist group.

"Politics and morality," says Armando Santana, slouching in his chair in his Union City headquarters, "are defined by whoever is in power. Look at Arafat," he says, flipping his keys around in his hand. "He used to be a dirty thief. Now he's thought of as a medi-

ator for peace. Maybe tomorrow they'll be portraying us as great liberators."

It would be an understatement to say that Santana and other exiles are inflamed about Fidel Castro's anticipated visit to the United Nations this month. Fresh from hosting the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Havana, Castro is expected to address the opening session of the U.N. General Assembly—his first visit to New York in nineteen years.

"They're going to try and do it," says one anxious government source. Without any specific intelligence, he is quick to point out, he believes a member of the Cuban Nationalist Movement might make an assassination attempt. "They've got the guys with the balls to do it. And the guy who does it, even if he goes away for life, will be the biggest f--king martyr they have ever had."

"What do you think? Do you think it would push relations closer, or farther away?" Santana asks, pondering the question of Castro's assassination with a sudden pensiveness. Then, he catches the visitor's eye. "Hey," he says with a smile. "I'm going to be far, far away when Castro comes. Yes, indeed. I don't want to be anywhere near New York City. Far away." ■