

December 30, 1975–May 19, 1976

## 8 SPY BAIT

The first warning comes from Ricardo Morales. "The FBI is closing in on you," he tells Otero, and Otero needs little persuasion. There are rumors of betrayal everywhere. His friends have scattered, and one of them may have turned over to a customs agent the typewriter he used for making bomb announcements to the newspapers. No one in Miami is thinking about Chileans or assassinations in Washington now, eight months before the Letelier bombing, but every newspaper reader in southern Florida knows about the mad Cuban terrorist, who, in a two-night spree, struck nearly every prominent symbol of legal authority—the police department, the FBI office, and the state attorney's office—along with the social security office, a bank, the state unemployment office, and even two post offices. The suspect also set off a blast in a locker at Miami International Airport. His daring and his assortment of targets have baffled authorities and terrorized citizens, many of whom are thinking twice about mailing letters, taking airplane flights, and visiting the downtown office district.

Otero must flee. There is no time to arrange for false papers or for much of a disguise—just an oversized hat and dark glasses. Otero returns to the Miami airport, where the bombings all started, and safely boards a flight to Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic. He realizes that his heart has been racing almost continuously for two months. Each time he shows his passport he fears arrest.

At the last checkpoint, it happens. Otero is led off to jail. All he

learns is that the Dominican police have been asked to detain him by the American FBI. Morales was right.

In jail, Otero is visited by Frank Castro, the head of the National Front for the Liberation of Cuba (FLNC). Otero has made two hundred jumps at Castro's Golden Falcon Skydiving Club in the Everglades, and for years he has gone to meetings and helped plan "actions" for various groups under Castro's political leadership. But Castro has never given him a coveted membership in the FLNC itself. Until now. In jail, Castro tells Otero that he has finally earned his membership. He also tells him that he will be out of jail soon. Castro is married to the daughter of an admiral who is close to President Balaguer of the Dominican Republic.

The next thing Otero knows, he is walking out of the jail. It is a miracle, he thinks. Frank Castro greets him with a sly smile and says the Americans do not run everything. The battle is not over, he warns, because the FBI will be angry and will no doubt seek an indictment of Otero. American authorities will pressure the Balaguer government to extradite him. But for the moment Otero is safe, and the moment is all he can think of. Castro slaps Otero on the back, and Otero slaps back. He is exhilarated. Suddenly presidents are doing him personal favors. He may be arrested again tomorrow, or shot by an agent of Fidel Castro, but who cares now? Otero is enjoying himself on the edge. It makes perfect sense to him when Frank Castro suggests that their next move should be to summon a newspaper reporter. "Why not?" He laughs. They decide to make some declarations to the world and show people they are not afraid.

Castro calls Don Bohning, Latin America editor for *The Miami Herald*. Bohning pledges secrecy and catches the next plane to Santo Domingo, where he meets Castro and Otero at an open-air restaurant. The two Cubans are casually dressed and relaxed, sipping cuba libres. Castro is wearing his CIA-issue Rolex wristwatch, an emblem from the old days. Otero, Bohning will write, "looks like anything but the accused terrorist he is." In fact, Otero looks like someone who is enjoying himself immensely as he tells Bohning of his background. Otero says that the United States government trained him to fight Fidel Castro—to shoot guns and make bombs—but now the Americans have changed their minds and are trying to put Otero and his fellow exiles in prison. Otero says he feels betrayed. Then he shrugs. But that is business, he says, and now he is on vacation.

Bohning leaves to write a sensational story about the fugitive bomber who ignores the international manhunt to entertain in public.



For Otero, the repercussions begin even before the story hits the streets of Miami. Rival reporters have heard of the *Herald's* scoop. Soon, half the Miami press corps is flying to Santo Domingo. Three local television stations have joined together to hire a Lear jet for their crews.

Before the hordes descend, Otero has second thoughts. It is nice to be so important, but a prolonged press orgy would certainly goad someone into arresting him. Flattery's rush gives way to panic. Otero bursts in on Frank Castro's bustling telephone area. "You are going to have to hold the press conference yourself," he says, "because I'm leaving."

Otero, through the window of his departing plane, sees the Lear jet land in Santo Domingo. It is a narrow escape. He laughs to himself that he is fleeing the press instead of the FBI. On the flight to Caracas, he remains both excited and afraid. He has only fifty dollars in his pocket and has become a fugitive terrorist, another of the famous exiles who have gone underground and international—men like Orlando Bosch and Morales. At last Otero has lived up to the expectations that have weighed on him ever since he was the youngest Cuban to land at the Bay of Pigs.

Morales, as promised, meets Otero's flight in Caracas and uses his authority to whisk him past all the customs officers and into a DISIP car, which, escorted by other DISIP cars, goes flying through the streets. Morales has embraced Otero on the runway and given thanks for his safe arrival. Now he offers Otero the hospitality of the Venezuelan government—a suite, free meals, a car and driver. But, he says, Otero's visit must be a short one. There is pressure from the Americans, and it will grow. Otero must leave Venezuela soon. In the interim, Morales and DISIP will try to find a safe place for him to go. "And while you are here, you must tell me what you're up to, my friend," says Morales.

In his apartment at the Anauco Hilton Hotel, Morales presses Otero about his plans—and about the bombings in Miami. Otero answers, figuring he has no choice. As for his plans, he says he is thinking of Chile.

This idea pleases Morales, who says that his organization in Venezuela, DISIP, is very interested in the operations of DINA, the Chilean intelligence service. DINA has been doing crazy things, such as contracting with a group of Cubans to shoot a Chilean senator and his wife in Rome, of all places—if the rumors are true. Morales says

that he would be happy to buy Otero a plane ticket to Chile, and to pay him a salary of \$300 a month, if Otero will go to Santiago, volunteer his services to DINA, and find out what they're up to.

"You mean you want me to be a spy?" asks Otero.

Morales only smiles. Otero asks questions and decides it is true. As he talks, he thinks. His services seem to be in great demand now that he is famous, and the prospect of working for both Venezuela and Chile, running anti-Communist missions, is a romantic one. On the other hand, Otero realizes that in a sense his choices are limited by his position—he can hardly afford to say no to anyone. To Morales, he says that he would never agree to accept the hospitality and assistance of the Chilean government of Pinochet and then spy on the Chileans. That would not be honorable. The Chilean government has been a steady ally of the Cuban exiles.

This answer does not please Morales, who explains that the Chileans will have nothing to worry about as long as they behave properly. Otero's services would provide some insurance, some intelligence. This would be only fair to Venezuela and DISIP in return for all the risk they have already taken to help Otero. Otero says he is grateful, but his principles will not allow him to ask the Chileans for help and then betray them. Morales smiles. Ever gracious, ever the protector, he says that he understands, but that there are limits to what he can do for Otero. He presses his argument through most of the night and then tells Otero they will discuss it further in the morning.

Otero cannot sleep that night. He knows that Morales has given him royal treatment and that Morales is the man most likely to help him, but he also knows that Morales might at any moment have him killed. Morales is renowned as a chameleon of intrigue, whose charm can instantly turn to wrath. Otero senses the violence coming from him, and he is frightened. He locks all the doors to his hotel suite. Then he strips all the beds for enough sheets to make a rope that will reach five stories to the ground outside. He sits next to a window until dawn with the sheet rope beside him.

The next morning, Morales returns with Orlando García, his boss. García is also a Cuban exile who has worked for the CIA, but he has been in Venezuela for more than a decade and is now head of DISIP, perhaps the closest adviser to President Pérez himself. Otero says he is honored to meet him. García says he is there to listen, and he does so as Morales repeats his proposition. There is a tautness about Morales that convinces Otero he was right to be afraid. Otero re-



peats his objections to García, who nods, thinks, and says there will be no problem. He says that DISIP is interested only in the protection of Venezuelan sovereignty, and therefore only in those DINA activities that might take place on Venezuelan soil. That's all he would like to know about. Anything else Otero might do with DINA would be Otero's private business, but García would feel entitled to know about anything DINA planned in Venezuela.

Otero, hesitating, looks at Morales and finds him smiling broadly. "You would not be a full spy," says Morales.

Otero is trapped, having just received a reasonable offer from a man who is effectively the highest law-enforcement officer in Venezuela. It is soon agreed. Otero tells García that he is worried about his personal security in Venezuela. Obliging, García places three DISIP cars and a detail of bodyguards at his disposal. Somehow this makes Otero feel better, even though he knows from the previous night that his protectors and his enemies have become blurred in his mind.

García praises Otero's bravery and toasts their new partnership before leaving the details to Morales. In parting, he tells Otero never to set foot in Venezuela again while the heat is on. It is imperative that they do nothing that might compromise the new secret relationship between Otero and DISIP.

Alone with Morales, Otero asks whether security might permit DISIP to give him some false papers for traveling. Morales shakes his head. False Venezuelan papers are out of the question, and anything else would take too much time. Otero will be leaving for Chile that same night. There is much to arrange, including a secret form of communication between Chile and Venezuela. Otero manages to enjoy only one brief outing with his entourage of bodyguards before Morales escorts him back to the airport.

Morales embraces Otero and puts him on an Iberia Airways flight to Santiago, courtesy of DISIP, and then Morales himself boards a flight to Miami. There he places a call to his FBI contact. On the phone, Morales puts fear into his voice and says that his life is in great danger. It will be impossible to meet personally with the FBI man this time because of the danger and the press of time, but Morales wants the FBI to know that Otero is in Caracas and has admitted placing all the bombs on the night of December 3, 1975, including the one at the FBI office. Otero has also admitted that he bought all the clocks used as detonators at the same store at the same time. Morales hurriedly passes along a few more details, but

then he breaks off the conversation. He promises to try to elicit more information, but for now he can only say that Otero is in the Anaeco Hilton Hotel in Caracas and that Otero plans to leave soon for Chile.

This information, sketchy as it is, amazes the FBI man once again. Morales seems to have the entire bombing world wired to his ear. It is now January 24, 1976—less than forty-eight hours since Otero disappeared in the Dominican Republic, less than twenty-four hours since Bohning's *Herald* story exploded in Miami. The man handling Morales for the FBI swears that Morales is the best informant the Bureau has ever had. Agents huddle in the Miami office and try to figure out how to nab Otero in Caracas in a way that will not endanger their prize informant. It will not be easy, they know.

By this time, Otero is already in Chile, of course. Otero knows that Morales has been an informant in the past and that he is a dangerous man, but it never occurs to him that Morales might be telling the FBI about his journey. That would be too brazen, too perfidious, even for Morales. Otero would not have time to think such dark thoughts even if he were so inclined. There is too much pressure on him. DISIP has advanced him very little money. He must make contact with the Chilean DINA before his funds run out.

Otero decides to try the direct approach. He goes straight to the Diego Portales Office Building in downtown Santiago, where President Pinochet has temporary quarters. (La Moneda, the Chilean White House, is still a bombed-out ruin from the 1973 coup.) There, according to Chilean custom, any person from any station in life can ask for and receive an appointment with the President himself. Otero signs his name in the big red book, but he learns to his dismay that appointments take years. Officials laugh at him when he speaks of a quick one. So Otero walks over to the Ministry of the Interior, reasoning that the security apparatus comes under Interior in most Latin countries. This is his best hope, as there is no DINA listing in the Santiago phone book.

Soon Otero is in the office of an army captain who says he is head of the internal security unit in the ministry. Otero introduces himself as a Cuban exile whose superiors have authorized him to make contact with the Chilean intelligence organization in the hope of establishing a liaison for anti-Communist missions. "Your people have probably heard of me," says Otero.

The wide-eyed officer disappears into an adjoining room. While he is gone, Otero copies down the number of his private telephone ex-



tension. When the officer returns, still agitated, he tells Otero to return to his hotel and wait.

A few days later, Otero opens the door of his hotel room to face a contingent of four men and a woman. Two of them stand guard at the door while the other three invite themselves inside. The leader introduces himself as Major Torres. He introduces his tall blond companion as Captain Wilson. He does not introduce the woman. Otero watches her, however, as the two Chileans begin to interrogate him, and he decides that the woman taking notes is studying him closely. Whenever there is a break, she stares at Otero with an impassive face and twinkling eyes.

Major Torres welcomes Otero to Chile. His purpose, he says, is to conduct a background security check on Otero to find out who he really is and what he represents. His government must be careful, says Torres, because there are so many Communist spies and informants trying to infiltrate the Pinochet regime. He asks Otero a few questions about his background and purpose, and then he steps aside for Captain Andrés Wilson.

"Let's start with the 2506 Brigade," says Wilson. "Who are the leaders? What do you think of the security of the organization?"

Otero, a Brigade member, answers as best he can. Wilson goes on to ask about many exile organizations, including Abdala, the FLNC, and the Cuban Nationalist Movement of Guillermo Novo. He goes on for more than an hour. Otero thinks his answers satisfy Wilson most of the time, as they should, since he can speak with authority as an experienced Cuban exile activist. But Wilson remains skeptical. He asks Otero how the Chileans can be sure Otero is not a spy. Anyone can plant a bomb and pretend to be on the run, he says. How can the Chileans be sure Otero is even a member of the Cuban organizations? Does he carry an ID card for the Brigade or for the FLNC?

Otero bristles. "Don't expect me to carry an identification card," he says. "Do you carry one when you are on a mission? Do you think the CIA and the FBI carry cards? That is not very professional. You are an intelligence officer. I have given you my name. You should be able to find out all these things you are asking."

After a time, Major Torres interrupts Wilson in a friendlier tone. He tells Otero that he will be contacted again, soon. In the meantime, Otero should enjoy Santiago.

Almost a week passes, during which Otero tries to amuse himself and appear normal. Then a burly, redheaded man of about forty-five comes to the hotel and introduces himself as Marcelo Estrobel. He

says he has something important to say but will not do so there in the hotel room. For security, he leads Otero out into the street and to a small restaurant. "Well, we have your assignment," Estrobel says bluntly.

Otero blinks in surprise. "You do?"

"Yes," says Estrobel. "Do you know who Andrés Pascal Allende is?"

"Sure," says Otero. "He is Allende's nephew."

"He is also a Communist and a terrorist," Estrobel declares. "We know he has been robbing banks in this country, but now he is in Costa Rica. We have asked the Costa Rican government to give him back to us, but we know they won't do it. As a matter of fact, we know they are going to release Pascal Allende soon, and he will go straight to Cuba. They will release him in the next few weeks. Your mission is to kill him before they do."

Otero is speechless, having never dreamed that he would be ordered about so roughly or so promptly. He has always expected a long series of meetings and trips and exchanges of intelligence.

"You have two weeks," says Estrobel. "Until February 22. After that, we will give the mission to another group. We are taking no chances."

"That's not very much time," says Otero, still trying to collect himself.

Estrobel dismisses this observation with a jerk of the head. "Pascal Allende is living with his girlfriend and terrorist companion, Mary Anne Beausire. She is a dancer, and she is very pretty, my friend. We want you to kill her, too."

"Kill her, too?" says Otero, stalling for time.

"Yes," says Estrobel.

"Well, let me tell you something about our organization," says Otero. "That is a problem. We don't mind killing him. We don't mind killing Communists, so that is no problem. But she is. Even if she is a Communist, we don't kill women. That is our professional code."

"The orders are to kill both of them," says Estrobel.

"I heard you," says Otero. "But we have never targeted women in an operation like that. We have targeted women in *other* kinds of operations, but nothing like that." He tries to laugh at his own joke, but Estrobel does not respond to the humor or to the sexual overtones. He only repeats the orders.

"Just a minute," says Otero. "I don't take instructions from you or anybody else in this country. I am here to make some kind of coordination with you."



"You are here to seek the support of my government," Estrobel reminds him sternly. "You are here to buy explosives and to seek a country of refuge. In return, you are offering your services on anti-Communist missions. This is your first mission. You are to kill both of them. You are to do it on your own resources and your own time, as a sign of good faith. After you've completed this first assignment, my government will show its gratitude to you and your people. We will support you with weapons and money. You will have *carte blanche*. But you have to do this first."

Otero stares at Estrobel and decides that he is the toughest, most abrupt man he has met in fifteen years of clandestine intrigue. "Look," he says. "You have to slow down. I'm trying to tell you that I have a few problems. I have a lot of FBI people looking for me all over Latin America. I can't just fly out of here on a difficult mission like this. And besides, I think my superiors would reject any order to kill a woman. We don't do that."

Estrobel seems to soften a bit. The two men argue about the assassination mission for the better part of two hours, speaking mostly of the justification for killing women in political war. Otero works his way into a stalemate. He says he wants a few days to think it over. When Estrobel leaves, he realizes that he will have to make the decision himself. He is too paranoid about wiretaps and surveillances to risk calling Frank Castro—or Morales.

A few days later Estrobel and Otero return to the same restaurant. Otero says he has determined to attempt the mission, on three conditions: first, he will need more time; second, he will not try to kill the woman; third, he will need false papers for travel.

Estrobel shakes his head slowly. No more time, he says. And no false papers.

"You are crazy," says Otero. "I can't move on my own name. Even here in Chile I have gotten in trouble with the police. They came to me and started asking me questions. I refused to answer them and told them to see Major Torres. So they didn't bother me. But they could have. In another country, I would have been caught already."

"No," says Estrobel. "You would have thought of something else. Use your own papers, or get some from somebody else. You won't have any problem."

Otero withers under the pressure. As a practical matter, he knows he has no choice. "I will take the chance," he says gamely. "But I will not target the woman."

"No problem," says Estrobel. "We are primarily interested in Pascal Allende. You do whatever you want about her. But if a bomb

blows up his car and she happens to be inside with him, you know, as an accident, we will give you a bonus." Estrobel is smiling for the first time.

"Okay," says Otero. Estrobel hands him a brown envelope, in which he finds black-and-white photographs of both Allende and Beausire. Otero whistles to himself as he studies the woman. "She is a fox," he says, and Estrobel agrees. In the envelope, he also finds a paper with sketchy biographical material on the targets and another paper with a series of cryptic names and addresses. These, he learns, are the code names and the post-office boxes by which he is to communicate with DINA.

"And remember what I told you before," said Estrobel. "If you betray us with your mouth, we will kill you. Like that." He snaps his fingers.

"I understand," says Otero.

"Especially to the FBI," says Estrobel. "If you squeal to the Americans the way many Cubans do, we will kill you as a traitor."

"Don't worry," says Otero. "The FBI is my enemy almost as much as Fidel."

On the flight to Lima, Otero takes stock of his recent performance. He has reason to be proud. He has already accomplished DISIP's objective of penetrating DINA, and he has done so with results that will shock even Morales. On the other hand, he knows that his position is weak and he is expected to do the impossible. Already, his friends in Venezuela and Chile have taken advantage of his fugitive status to give him nothing more than two plane tickets and two life-or-death assignments. So far, Otero has managed to accept only half of each assignment, but the effect is the same. He cannot refuse anything, and therefore he is irresistible to spy organizations. If he is not killed by his enemies, he will only accumulate obligations to his allies. If the CIA were to catch him in Costa Rica, he fears, they would probably try to use him against the Venezuelans.

Otero decides that it would be too dangerous to go straight to Costa Rica, as the Chileans expect. But where else can he make the arrangements for the Pascal Allende mission? Where else is safe? After a time, he decides to go back to Caracas from Lima. This in itself is a measure of his desperation, since García and Morales have warned him not to come back. On top of everything else, he must worry about the Chilean DINA. If they are following him, they will surely regard it as a betrayal that he is diverting to Venezuela.

In the Lima airport, Otero imagines Tupamaros and FBI agents



everywhere ahead of him, and he feels the Chileans behind. He changes his plane ticket for Caracas, wondering if DINA can trace him. Suddenly someone taps his shoulder and Otero whirls around, ready to fight.

"You forgot your sunglasses," says an old man.

Otero tries to collect himself. Then he scolds himself for poor tradecraft for having taken off his sunglasses at the customs booth.

The next day Otero fears arrest all over again at the Caracas airport. Then, standing in line, he spots a familiar face coming through one of the gates. It is none other than Orlando García. Otero is shaken by the coincidence. García seems to be equally distressed at the sight of Otero. He whisks Otero through immigration and off into a corner. "What the hell are you doing here?" he demands.

"Well, I picked up some very valuable intelligence down in Chile," says Otero. "And I think it's too sensitive to give you except in person."

García looks quite put out. "Well, I can't protect you in this country," he says. "You are a fool. Don't you realize that Kissinger is coming here in three days and all of Caracas is full of American security people? If they don't get you, our police will."

"What about the intelligence?" asks Otero.

"You tell Morales," snaps García. "He is my right hand, you know. But he is in Miami now." García sends Otero to Morales's apartment with a DISIP escort and instructions not to set foot outside until Morales returns.

While Otero waits in Caracas, Morales is in secret conference with his FBI handler in Miami. The agent is upset that Morales was not able to hold Otero in Caracas until an arrest could be arranged. Morales defends himself by citing all the pressures on him. His government, he says, wanted to get rid of Otero as quickly as possible, fearing that Otero's fanatical fellow Cuban exiles would set bombs off all over Venezuela if anything happened to Otero there. Morales says that his superiors ordered him to take Otero to the airport and that he had complied—not being able to tell them, of course, that he was also working for the FBI.

This mollifies the FBI agent somewhat. Then Morales confides that he has been able to extract more information from Otero about the Miami bombings, at no little risk to himself. Otero, he says, confessed to him that the bombings were an outburst of protest against "the system," as Otero saw it—a system that had trained Otero to

fight, that had hooked him on conspiracy over the years to the point that Otero had to resort to the numbers racket, or *bolita*, to support himself, which he felt was degrading, and a system that then rejected Otero repeatedly when he tried to re-enter normal life. As to the fingerprint left on the airport locker, Morales says that Otero told him he had worn gloves to place the bomb but had taken them off, fearing that gloves would look too conspicuous in 80-degree weather. That was his only mistake.

In conclusion, Morales passes along the names of the people Otero had identified to him as accomplices, with some further incriminating information. It amounts to a believable confession, and Morales assures the agent that he will testify to it in open court. He signs a statement to that effect.

Amazed once again, the agent takes the statement to the Miami FBI office. Morales goes back to Caracas two days later, on February 15, 1976, and finds Otero waiting in his apartment. Otero has already decided that his situation is so desperate that he should give up the pact he has made with himself and with DISIP to report only DINA activities that affect Venezuela. Now, to protect himself, he becomes a "full spy" for Morales and tells him of his adventures in Santiago. Morales is impressed, especially when Otero hands him the brown envelope with the photographs and the codes. He smiles at Otero. "Well, my friend," he says, "what do we do next?"

Otero says that he has taken the liberty of calling Frank Castro for emergency help. Castro is already on a flight to Caracas. Morales seems pleased. It would be wise, he says, to consult with the head of the FLNC in such a situation. Morales goes back to the airport, and, surrounded by squads of his DISIP men, picks Frank Castro out of the incoming crowd and ushers him past customs and immigration.

The three men are soon in Morales's apartment, discussing the merits of the Pascal Allende assignment. Success, they agree, would benefit them all. Otero would earn a place of refuge in Chile. Morales would have a high-level penetration of DINA for his DISIP superiors. And Frank Castro's FLNC would move ahead of the rival Cuban exile groups that are jockeying for Chile's favor. On this last point, Otero recalls several of Estrobel's comments that made him think Orlando Bosch, the baby doctor, was heading the backup group Estrobel had spoken of. Bosch would be hunting Pascal Allende, too.

Privately, Frank Castro tells Otero that he would have preferred to consider the venture without the involvement of the devious Morales. But it cannot be helped, and Morales can offer certain help.



He can, for instance, use the DISIP intelligence system to pinpoint Pascal Allende's location in Costa Rica. At one point Morales leaves his apartment and comes back within hours to tell Otero and Castro that the targets are living in the Presidential Hotel in San José, Costa Rica. He gives them the room number as well. Otero and Castro are impressed.

After endless discussions of feasibility, tactics, and security, Otero turns to his companions and says, "Well, if we agree, let's do it."

They agree. Frank Castro says he has already raised the \$10,000 they estimate will be required for the operation. He has forbidden Otero's participation in the actual assassination on the ground that Otero's face and name are too hot, too much in the press. So Castro has contacted two other FLNC "action men" and arranged for them to meet him in Nicaragua. From there they will go overland to Costa Rica. Otero, meanwhile, will go back to Chile immediately.

This is the only part of the plan Otero doesn't like. Mindful of Estrobel's warnings, he doesn't want to be in Chile if things go wrong in Costa Rica. But Morales has orders. García is annoyed with Otero for returning to Venezuela, so Otero must go. He can tell Estrobel that he has arranged with his superiors in the FLNC to have Pascal Allende assassinated. That should satisfy the Chileans.

Frank Castro leaves Caracas for Nicaragua on February 19. Otero flies to Santiago the next day and goes back to his hotel. He sends a coded telegram to Estrobel, asking for a meeting. Then he waits. No one contacts him. Otero sends more messages. After a week, he goes back to the army captain in the Ministry of the Interior and asks him to contact Estrobel. Then he waits again. Two weeks go by. He fights the temptation to use the telephone system to call Frank Castro. Otero walks the streets. The hotel bills eat up his money and he is forced to take an inexpensive apartment. He leaves a forwarding address at the hotel.

Finally, a knock sounds at the door. It is a DINA agent—one of the messengers Otero has met before—and Otero knows instantly that the news is not good. "Estrobel wants to kill you," says the officer. "He may do it when he gets back in the country. The entire operation in Costa Rica has been blown."

Otero, in shock, learns that Orlando Bosch has been arrested in San José, that his own name has been mentioned in the newspapers as a would-be assassin of Pascal Allende. The DINA messenger advises Otero to hop on the next plane to Costa Rica and kill Pascal Allende if he wants to live himself. Otero, cornered, replies that Chil-

ean airplanes will blow up in the skies if any harm comes to him. A shouting match ensues, and the DINA officer breaks it off by stalking out. He says Otero will hear from DINA again.

Now Otero is frightened enough to forget about security. He calls Frank Castro with his story. "My life is not worth very much right now," he says.

Castro analyzes a hundred possible betrayals. The Chileans could have bungled. Orlando Bosch could have bungled. But the basic story is true. There are headlines all over the place. Bosch was arrested for plotting against the life of Henry Kissinger, as well as that of Pascal Allende! Otero's head is spinning. It is also conceivable that Frank Castro betrayed the operation. His name has not appeared in the stories. He has not been arrested. Otero suppresses the thought. He has to trust someone.

"It was the Monkey," says Castro, vowing retribution. No such punishment will help Otero, however. He is trapped. He cannot hope to escape from Chile against DINA's wishes. All he can do is sit tight and wait and hope that he can convince the DINA people that he is on their side, having shared their cause all these years. Otero goes back to his apartment, no longer the carefree fugitive who drinks cuba libres with reporters.

In Miami, Ricardo Morales has met again with his FBI handler on March 8 and confided to him further details of Otero's explanation of the Miami bombings. He has also related a sketchy but astonishing tale about how the Chileans tried to recruit Otero for an assassination mission against Pascal Allende.

On March 17, in Buenos Aires, Legal Attaché Scherrer receives a cable from FBI headquarters advising him that the MIBOM suspect, Rolando Otero, has reportedly fled to Santiago, Chile, in Scherrer's territory. The cable goes on to say that Otero may have been recruited by the Chilean DINA to assassinate Andrés Pascal Allende, nephew of the former Chilean President. Headquarters instructs Scherrer to make no inquiries whatsoever regarding this intelligence, and to take no action, as any move on his part might compromise the identity of a sensitive FBI source. For the time being, the information is strictly for Scherrer's private edification.

Scherrer does not know that the source is Morales, and he knows very little about Otero except that he is the famous terrorist who is supposed to have bombed the Miami FBI office. Still, the cable annoys Scherrer. It deprives him of a rare opportunity to do something



about terrorism instead of merely absorbing the grisly facts. And Scherrer needs desperately to do something—for the sake of his own mental health, if nothing else.

It is a reasonable bet that Scherrer has been closer to more acts of sickening terrorism than any living American. His six years in Buenos Aires have coincided with a stretch of unspeakable internecine violence among the Argentines, during which scarcely a day passed without news of more kidnapped industrialists, deadly police raids, discoveries of mutilated corpses, executions of or by policemen, and daring bombing raids by the Marxist/Perónist Montoneros or the Trotskyite Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP) or the right-wing Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA). The violence was appalling even before the return to power of the legendary General Juan Perón, after nearly twenty years in exile, and it has become much worse since his death in 1974. There were 814 officially reported terrorist deaths before the end of 1975, and the number of recorded political assassinations in 1976 will reach 354 by May 1.

In letters and on home leaves, Scherrer finds it difficult to describe for Americans the atmosphere in Argentina, where the fear is pervasive and yet random, where the guerrillas and the police alike have made alliances with civilian criminals, and where all sides support themselves by extortion. Politicians and reporters in Argentina try to impose some meaning on the chaos by labeling the good guys and the bad guys, the right-wingers and the left-wingers, according to their views. Scherrer knows better, being privy to the government's own accounts.

His job is to conduct liaison with the Argentine law-enforcement agencies, chiefly Interpol and the Federal Police. Three of the Federal Police chiefs he has known have been assassinated—one shot, one blown up by a bomb placed under the mattress of his bed, and the third annihilated by a bomb that blew his 36-foot boat ten meters into the air, killing him and his wife. Shortly after the death of the third one, one of Scherrer's contacts at the Federal Police told him it was an inside job, set up by a sergeant on the chief's own staff. They had ample proof of the sergeant's involvement, said the contact, but it never occurred to anyone to arrest, try, and execute him. Instead, the Federal Police staged a shoot-out. They placed the corpses of Montonero prisoners in the back of a milk truck, which was driven past the sergeant's duty post at a high rate of speed. The sergeant and his colleagues ran after the milk truck, whereupon one of the colleagues shot the sergeant in the head. They fired a few rounds

into the milk truck, and then the Federal Police announced to the press and public that two Montonero terrorists had stolen a milk truck and then been gunned down by valiant Federal Police officers, including a sergeant who was killed in the gun battle. Case closed. Word went out within the force that the sergeant had been executed, but there was no embarrassing publicity about the Federal Police. The sergeant's widow got her pension. And the entire matter was presented to the public in an acceptable manner, as a success in the war against the Montoneros.

Scherrer has heard dozens of variations on the milk-truck episode from his contacts in Argentine law enforcement, who are the people who concoct them. He receives the information because of his personal relationship with the officers, which is built on discretion. His ambassadors invariably appreciate the gruesome stories for their intelligence value. And occasionally Scherrer gets to draw on his relationships in matters that involve Americans. A year before the Otero case, for instance, Montoneros kidnapped a retired American named John Patrick Egan, who was serving as an American consular agent in the province of Córdoba, stamping visas. The Montoneros demanded as a condition of his release that four imprisoned Montoneros be shown on television to prove that they were alive and well. Scherrer went to his police contacts, who told him that three of the four had been killed already and that the fourth one was so badly disfigured from torture that he couldn't go on television. Scherrer told his boss, the American ambassador, that Egan was doomed. The Argentine government announced that the four Montonero prisoners were well but would not be shown on television, because the government would not negotiate with terrorists. The next day, Egan was dumped on a highway, wrapped in a Montonero flag, shot through each eye and horribly mutilated.

Scherrer knows that he must leave Argentina soon. As much as he loves the city of Buenos Aires and his position there in his own fiefdom, virtually independent of the Bureau, he realizes that the years of terrorism have worn him down. On numerous occasions, shooting has broken out in the neighborhood late at night, and Scherrer has herded his wife and their three small children down into the cellar in their nightclothes. The son of his wife's best friend recently disappeared and then turned up in the woods, dead, like countless others. Publicly, the Federal Police declared that the terrorists killed the young man, but they revealed to Scherrer in private that it was renegades from the Buenos Aires provincial police. This is the general



pattern. The police blame their own killings on the Montoneros, and vice versa, and there are many extra killings that no one even bothers to blame anyone for anymore. In a showdown, Scherrer would side with the police, even with the corrupt ones, against the guerrillas, because the police are his colleagues and the guerrillas have branded him an enemy of the people. But this would be a choice of stark survival.

A week after receiving the Bureau cable about Otero, Scherrer watches the Argentine military move in to topple the floundering government of the dictator's widow, Isabel Perón. The level of violence quickly grows. It is now the anti-Perónist military against everyone else, and Scherrer's law-enforcement contacts advise him that it will be a war of extermination against Communists, Perónists, troublemakers, intellectuals, and their supporters. Civil restraints have been erased and petty hatreds let loose more than ever. Scherrer is glad to be from the United States, where things are done differently, and in that connection he decides that he must do something about the fugitive terrorist in Chile.

In early April, he sends a cable to headquarters stating that he believes he can force the Chilean government to extradite Otero to the United States for trial. By way of analysis, he writes that the Pinochet government already has a severe human-rights problem in the eyes of the world that Pinochet would like to overcome, and that Pinochet would therefore feel vulnerable to the threat of being publicly and officially denounced by the United States for harboring a wanted terrorist bomber. Scherrer does not believe that the Chileans would be willing to protect "the likes of Otero" at all costs. He predicts that they would give him up if subjected to enough pressure. Scherrer advises headquarters that he will leave soon for Santiago to begin applying that pressure.

Headquarters replies immediately with a rare and specific veto, ordering Scherrer not to mention Otero to anyone in Chile. Moreover, he is not even to set foot in Chile, lest his very presence raise alarms that might endanger the Bureau's source.

This cable annoys Scherrer beyond endurance. The source information—that Otero is in Chile—is so general that it could have come from thousands of people. It is not specific enough to endanger a source, in Scherrer's view. The real reason for the veto is that headquarters is committed to its own plan for extracting Otero, which involves having a U.S. attorney ask the State Department to revoke

Otero's passport as the first act in a long and complicated chain of legal events which might culminate in Otero's expulsion from Chilean soil. Scherrer thinks the plan is ridiculous.

Scherrer knows the very Chileans who would have to locate Otero and arrest him. He knows their customs, their language, and their relationships with rivals inside the Chilean government. Yet headquarters expects him to do nothing about the one terrorist case over which he can exercise legal jurisdiction. In effect, headquarters is telling him to remain a passive receptacle for intelligence about the seamy world of terrorism. Scherrer has had more than his fill of that as a foreigner in Argentina.

He does not challenge the headquarters cable. Instead, he contacts a trusted friend in the Investigations Department, Chile's equivalent of the FBI, and asks him to initiate a general inquiry about Otero. The next day, Investigations in Santiago sends a routine request to the local office of Interpol, asking who Otero is and where he has last been sighted. Interpol-Chile sends a cable to Interpol in the United States, as Otero is an American citizen, and that office forwards the request to FBI headquarters. In short order, Scherrer receives an urgent cable from headquarters, where alarmed officials want to know why Interpol-Chile is asking about Otero. How did they find out Otero was in Chile? To this, Scherrer replies blandly that Chile's Investigations Department must have learned about Otero from one of its sources. Then, secrecy broken, he prepares to fly to Santiago.

On Monday, April 12, Scherrer has a private cup of coffee in Santiago with one of the Investigations detectives who have been assigned to the Otero case. The detective is smiling. He says that Otero had been staying in room 711 of the Hotel Emperador until recently. Now Otero has moved to a suburb of Santiago called Providencia, but he still checks back at the hotel regularly for messages. It would be easy to arrest him, says the detective, except for DINA. Otero has already referred police to DINA when they tried to question him about his visa status. DINA's involvement will be a serious obstacle, but the detective says with a grin that for him it is also an incentive. He hates DINA. As an old police regular, he resents the way DINA tries to subvert normal detective work to politics. Colonel Contreras has won for DINA the right to take employees from Investigations and all other agencies of the Chilean government, and Contreras demands from his people an unswerving, blind loyalty. He expects DINA officers to bring him reports, gossip, and blackmail material



from their old organizations, for instance, so that Contreras can build his own power base at the expense of the older branches of government. He has been extraordinarily successful. DINA exercises an electric power in Chile, similar to that of the Gestapo at the height of the Third Reich. It is admired by the faithful, privately resented by the constitutionalists, and universally feared.

After a candid strategy discussion with the detective, Scherrer goes off to see General Ernesto Baeza,\* head of the Investigations Department. He already knows of Baeza's role in the coup and of his reputation as a straightforward military traditionalist, quite formal in business affairs. In Scherrer's estimation, Baeza is the kind of courtly official who would be offended if Scherrer were to let on that he knew Investigations had already located Otero. So he pays his compliments to General Baeza, as he has on criminal cases in the past, and informs him of the terrorist who has reportedly fled to Chile. Baeza nods along as though he has never heard of Otero. When Scherrer mentions that Otero may have been in contact with DINA, Baeza continues to nod and makes only the slightest show of annoyance. Scherrer knows that Baeza deeply resents Contreras, believing him to be an officer of inferior rank who used unscrupulous, dishonorable methods to advance himself at the expense of Baeza and Investigations, but he also knows that Baeza will never say anything openly critical of a brother army officer and government official. Baeza promises that Investigations will do everything in its power to locate and apprehend Otero for Scherrer.

A few days later, Scherrer is summoned back to Baeza's office. "I have something unfortunate to tell you," says the general. "It's about the terrorist you brought to my attention the other day, Otero. I'm afraid the case has been taken over by DINA, for national security reasons."

"National security?" says Scherrer. He suppresses an urge to snicker over the implications of this simple admission that Chile's national security is entangled with the fate of a man who stands indicted for bombing nine targets in far-off Miami.

"Yes," said Baeza. "Naturally, I can't be more specific, since it does involve national security. I can only assure you and the FBI that a complete and thorough search will be made for this man. I'm sure Colonel Contreras and his men will find him. They are quite resourceful."

"I hope so," says Scherrer, noting that the general is erect, unsmil-

\*See above, pages 64 and 65.

ing, and that he speaks with only a trace of sarcasm about DINA's skills. Scherrer knows that Baeza knows that Otero has long since been located. Furthermore, Scherrer believes that Baeza has instructed his detectives to tell Scherrer so privately. But here, officially, Baeza maintains the dignity of the Chilean government.

"I'm sorry that I cannot report more definitive progress to you," says Baeza. "But my people will continue to monitor the situation, and I will let you know what happens."

"Thank you," says Scherrer.

"By the way," says Baeza. "Do you know of a man named Frank Castro?"

"Yes, I do," says Scherrer. "I don't know much about him, but I've seen his name in FBI files as a Cuban terrorist based in Miami. He is head of an exile group called the FLNC."

"That is interesting," says Baeza. "This man Otero may have been in contact with him from here in Chile, I understand. It might be helpful if you could provide us with more information about Frank Castro. I could see that it is passed along to the right people."

"No problem," says Scherrer, heartened by this indication that Baeza has not dropped the Otero investigation altogether. "I will get the information as soon as possible. You know best what to do with it. Needless to say, I have complete confidence in your direction of this case, General. I know that neither you nor any of your superiors in the government condone this kind of terrorist activity."

Not long after leaving Baeza's office, Scherrer meets confidentially with his friends in the Investigations detective force. His goal, he tells them, is to squeeze Contreras. He hopes General Baeza will take the information about Otero to President Pinochet himself, so that Pinochet will demand explanations of Contreras from above. At the same time, information about Otero should be planted in the various branches of military intelligence. The broader the dissemination of knowledge about DINA's involvement with Otero, he reasons, the harder it will be for Contreras to hide him.

The legal attaché soon leaves Chile. He has five other countries to cover, and the paperwork is building up back in Buenos Aires. He tells the detectives that he hopes to return in a few weeks with information from FBI headquarters about what Otero has been telling people in the United States.

With the month of March gone, and April slowly passing, Otero grows poorer and more desperate. He calls Frank Castro and begs him to wire money to his bank account in Chile. Castro speaks in



shorthand whispers. He is worried about security. Otero is too hot, he says, with the FBI and the Chileans and everybody else. A bank wire is too open a transaction. Castro is looking for a more secure way to transfer funds. In the meantime, he reassures Otero, measures have already been taken to protect him. The organization will blow up airplanes and other Chilean property if any harm comes to Otero. Chilean representatives have been advised of this.

No money comes. Otero behaves erratically. On some days he walks the streets constantly, staying out in the open. On other days he never leaves his apartment. He has to stay in the apartment every night because of the Pinochet government's blanket curfew, still in effect nearly three years after the coup. A curfew, he realizes, is a serious handicap for a fugitive.

One night a handful of armed men push their way inside and begin to frisk Otero for weapons. He has none. Behind the agents, giving orders, Otero sees Andrés Wilson, the blond intelligence officer who interrogated him two months ago about Cuban exile organizations.

"You know there are responsible people who want to kill you, don't you?" asks Wilson.

"I'm used to that," says Otero, fighting panic. He did not like Wilson before, and now he sees a calm about him that is unnerving. Otero wishes Wilson were more agitated, because that would be more normal, and Otero associates normality with staying alive.

"Let's take a ride," says Wilson. To Otero, he speaks too quietly, as though he has done this before.

The agents shove Otero into the passenger seat of a car. A stocky, powerfully built man gets in behind him. Captain Wilson drives like a Grand Prix champion, peeling around corners and flying through downtown intersections with no thought of slowing down.

"That's one of the nice things about the curfew," says Wilson. "No cars on the street at night."

The engine whines as the car speeds up Cerro San Luis, a hill outside the city. Otero grows increasingly numb as he sees more trees and fewer houses.

Wilson suddenly throws the car across the road and skids to a halt on a turnout that overlooks Santiago. Otero sees the lights of the city in the distance. Immediately ahead he sees the tops of trees. They are on the edge of a bluff. Otero feels strangely peaceful. If the time comes, he tells himself, you can't avoid it. He starts to get out of the car.

"Stay where you are," says Wilson. He reaches under his seat and

pulls out a small black box, which he places on the console of the car, behind the gearshift lever.

"That is a tape recorder," says Otero, somewhat addled by the tension.

Wilson ignores him and turns on the machine. "Now, why don't you tell me exactly where you have gone and who you have talked to since you left Chile to fail on your mission?" he requests evenly. "And pretend your life depends on being accurate."

Otero stares at the machine. Then he starts to talk. He tells Wilson about Morales and García and Frank Castro and the meetings in Caracas. He figures he is in no position to hold back information regarding the Venezuelans, just as he had figured he couldn't hold back about the Chileans on his last trip to Caracas.

When Otero finishes, Wilson looks bored and disgusted, as though he knew everything in advance. He turns off the machine, thinks for a moment, and then turns to Otero. "So you are given a mission of the utmost sensitivity by the service, and the first thing you do is tell a man like Monkey Morales?" he says softly, in mock disappointment. "A known informant?"

"I didn't have any choice," says Otero, with a sigh. "In my position, I didn't have any choice."

Wilson says nothing. Instead, he twists the ignition key and roars back down the hill just as swiftly as he drove up. No one says anything, least of all Otero, who soon finds himself looking at the door to his apartment.

"Get out," says Wilson. "You will be contacted."

Otero, in disbelief, manages to run inside, half expecting to be shot in the back. He does not sleep the rest of the night.

The next morning, Otero packs up his few belongings and leaves the apartment for good, having decided that he does not want to be contacted by DINA again. He will do the next bit of contacting himself, after enough time passes for tempers to cool. That morning, he makes his way to a small office on Viollier Street that serves as a meeting place for the Scorpions, a local parachute club. Otero has been making friends there over the past few weeks, trading yarns about skydiving. To ingratiate himself with the curious Chileans, he has gone so far as to confide that he is a man of some intrigue, and when pressed for details, he has admitted to the president of the Scorpions that he is wanted for blowing up two Spanish ships. In point of fact, this is a lie. Otero knows, like almost every Cuban exile from Miami, that Cuban commandos on a CIA mission did once at-



tack two Spanish freighters in the Caribbean—either by accident or as a protest against Spain's decision to open commerce with Havana—and that the attacks caused such a diplomatic fuss the CIA was obliged to apologize to the Spanish government. But that was ten years ago, and Otero had nothing to do with the attacks in the first place. He has merely dressed up the stories in order to impress the club members without giving up any real intelligence material. And it has worked. The members seem to consider him good company, an exotic foreigner who is exciting to have around. Now, when Otero asks to use the club office as his home for a while, no one objects. Otero agrees to help out with the chores. There is no bed in the office, but he doesn't mind sleeping on the floor.

A few nights later, hurrying back to the office before curfew, Otero senses that he is being followed by a slow-moving car. He speeds up and turns a few corners. The car is still behind. Otero thinks it is a clumsy surveillance, as the agents are not bothering to conceal themselves. When the parachute club comes into sight, he breaks into a slow trot.

Three armed men step away from the door just before Otero reaches it. He whirls to see the car screeching up behind him, doors flying open. Otero flattens himself against the wall of a building and raises his hands very slowly. He is soon staring into an array of gun barrels. For some reason, his mind locks into the task of figuring out the makes and models. They are all snub-nosed revolvers, he sees, and he decides that one of them looks like a .38 Crowley.

"You are under arrest," says the leader. "Let's go inside."

The agents shove him through the door and throw him face down across a desk. They are shouting among themselves about handcuffing him, and then they are arguing over who forgot the handcuffs. One of them yanks the laces out of Otero's tennis shoes. Then, to his astonishment, Otero feels the agent tying his hands behind him with his own shoestrings. He also notices that the agents are wearing only dirty T-shirts, despite the cold night weather, and that one of them is wearing heavy street shoes without socks. All this convinces him that he has fallen prey to a gang of unofficial ruffians. He decides they are Communists.

"We are going to help you," says the leader in a menacing tone.

"I don't need any help like yours," Otero replies.

"But we can't help you unless we know everything," says the leader. "So who are you involved with in Chile?"

Otero grimaces as one of the agents jerks his tied hands upward

behind him. "I won't tell you anything unless you identify yourself," he says. "I want to see your identification."

The leader pulls a card from his wallet and sticks it before Otero's face. It says *Military Intelligence Service*, known in Chile as SIM.

"I don't believe it," says Otero. "What are your orders, then? What are the charges against me?"

"Well," says the leader, "we are thinking of charging you with blowing up two Spanish ships for the CIA."

"What?" cries Otero, realizing that one of the Scorpions has been talking to his captors. "You are crazy! Where is the ship? Where is the ship that was blown up?"

"You shut up and answer the questions," orders the leader. "I'll ask them."

Otero is gasping in frustration, now that absurdity has blended into the terror. "You say you are from SIM? You say you are an intelligence officer?" he cries. "You are on the moon! You don't know what's going on! You don't know who you're talking to! Let me tell you something: You are a lieutenant, but if you put one finger on me to harm me, you are going before the firing squad!"

There is a pause. The agents seem to be whispering among themselves. Otero thinks his speech has made an impression on them. He musters all the authority he can in that position and tells the lieutenant to contact DINA and ask for Major Torres. Major Torres will know what to do. The agents talk over this proposal, and soon they put a blindfold on Otero and drag him to a car outside. Otero tries to make a mental map of their route. He thinks he winds up in a house near the airport.

Some time the next day, the lieutenant returns. "Major Torres says he doesn't know anything about you," he declares.

Otero, still blindfolded, groans and calls out for his little telephone book, which the agents have confiscated. He directs the lieutenant to the name and number of the captain in the Ministry of the Interior, his original contact in Chile. "You call this man and tell him that I am Rolando Otero and I want to talk to Mr. Estrobel in DINA," says Otero. He fears Estrobel more than anyone in DINA except for Captain Wilson—more than anyone in Chile except for the uneducated gang of thugs who have been gloating out loud over the privilege of breaking his bones. Yet Otero appeals to Estrobel, of all people, in the hope that he might be susceptible to reason.

The lieutenant returns a few hours later. "You have friends," he says. Otero is elated. He does not even mind when he is dragged to a



car again that night. At least he is moving, possibly to friendlier hands. Mentally, Otero is polishing up his excuses for Estrobel when he is pulled from the car and someone cuts the shoelaces off his wrists. Still blindfolded, he is guided a few paces and then shoved into a thick, overpowering stench. A door shuts behind him. Otero pulls off the blindfold to discover that he is in a small, windowless, concrete cell, alone. There is no latrine. A rotten wool carpet covers the floor. That night, he hears screams of agony nearby. He also hears thuds. Otero decides someone is probably being beaten with a rifle butt. Every few days, the screams drown out the wall tapping of the prisoners and the footsteps of the guards.

Making small talk with General Baeza, Scherrer promises to attend the graduation banquet of the Investigations Academy again that year and to present an official FBI plaque to the cadet with the highest scores on the target range. Then, getting down to business, he briefs the general on the Otero situation. There is a lot of new information. Scherrer has learned that Otero has been making phone calls from a certain candy store in Santiago. He has a list of the people Otero has called. He also knows the name of Otero's bank and his bank account number. And he has the numbers and addresses of various places Otero has been sighted, including a parachute club called the Scorpions. Scherrer says he will furnish all this in writing for General Baeza so that he can pass it along to the appropriate authorities.

"Very good," replies Baeza. "I am sure that this information will be of great benefit to Colonel Contreras in his search for the fugitive."

"I hope so," says Scherrer. "But I should tell you that there are intelligence stories in Santiago that DINA has already located Otero and taken him into custody." He does not tell Baeza that the intelligence stories came from Baeza's own detectives. This is by prearrangement to protect the general, who is not authorized to reveal what DINA has done.

"That is possible," says Baeza. "You will have to take that up with Colonel Contreras himself, since he is handling the case for us. I think it's time for you to meet him, Bob. You should go over there and talk to him personally. Tell him about this man Otero and what he is wanted for. I'm sure he'll understand your problems with terrorists."

"That sounds like a good idea to me," says Scherrer. "I hope I can get an appointment."

"I'm sure you'll get one," says Baeza, with just a trace of a smile.

"Good," says Scherrer. "I think I would tell the colonel that I have heard Otero has been apprehended and that I intend to remain here in Santiago until he is turned over to me."

"Well, if that is your information, you should consult with Colonel Contreras about it," says Baeza.

Scherrer is much relieved that Baeza has not protested against this message as too harsh and reckless. Instead, the general has given tacit approval for Scherrer to say he knows Otero is already arrested. Contreras will know this information has probably come from Investigations. Baeza is stepping up the pressure. Scherrer feels even better when the general offers an Investigations limousine and the escort of his personal aide for the trip to DINA headquarters.

Late that afternoon, Baeza's military aide guides Scherrer through checkpoints and into the DINA compound—a sprawling series of one-story buildings, connected by lawns and driveways, in downtown Santiago. They find Contreras alone in his office. He is not the coarse-looking martinet that diplomat gossip has led Scherrer to expect. Contreras is rather short and slightly paunchy, but in dress and comportment he is the essence of refinement. His suit (all military officers in DINA wear civilian clothes) is an expensively tailored pinstripe cut in the European style. He speaks formal Spanish, never uttering a word of slang. Already, after five minutes and a handshake, Scherrer knows more about Contreras than most spies in Chile do. Contreras's name never appears in the newspapers, and Contreras himself never attends diplomatic functions. He is a figure of great mystery in Santiago. Very few military attachés have ever met him. Only one officer of the Santiago CIA station has ever seen Contreras, and he has told Scherrer very little.

The office is airy and light, ten yards square. Matching pairs of French doors lead on one end to a garden and on the other to a private dining room, flanked by secretaries' offices. Everything about the ambiance is French—French Provincial chairs, the small French obelisk on the enormous oak desk, a French artist's sculpture of a woman's head in the corner, French lace curtains—except for the music that spills softly from speakers in a bookshelf, which is standard American Muzak. Behind Contreras's desk, there is a mural of a Chilean mountain lake. There are also two photographs—a medium-size one of all four leaders of the Chilean military junta and a much larger one of General Pinochet alone. Scherrer sees a political message in the disparity, knowing that Contreras has used DINA to



strengthen Pinochet at the expense of the other three leaders. The only evidence he sees of an intelligence function is a television set mounted on the wall, showing a picture of the entrance to the DINA compound. By means of a console, mounted on his desk near the bank of telephones, Contreras can switch to other strategic views. He can even put President Pinochet's desk on the screen.

For fifteen minutes, Scherrer delivers an exposition on the MIBOM case and all the federal statutes and state laws Otero allegedly violated. Contreras plays absentmindedly with a slide rule as he listens. He explains the habit as a holdover from his years as a military engineer.

"Any bomb is bad," Scherrer concludes. "But we think Otero's targets bespeak the complete irrationality of the man. I'm sure you can understand our position. If a Cuban had come to Chile and placed a bomb in a locker out at Pudahuel Airport and then fled to the United States, you would be in our position. And you would probably come to us."

"Absolutely," says Contreras. "And we would want him back."

"Of course," says Scherrer. "We want Otero back the same way. And the reason I'm here is that General Baeza informed me that you are in charge of the case, and I've heard some unconfirmed good news that you have already managed to apprehend Otero for us . . ."

"... Well, that's not quite true," says Contreras. "We did pick up a Cuban, and we ourselves thought it was Otero. But it was not. It was another Cuban. I'm sorry."

This news stuns and perplexes Scherrer, who tries not to show it. "Well, what was the Cuban's name?" he asks.

"I can't remember," says Contreras. "Quite frankly, I lost interest when I learned it was not your man Otero. I can get the name for you, if you like."

"Please do," says Scherrer.

"But I agree with you about how dangerous the Cuban exiles are," says Contreras. "We believe it was another Cuban exile here in Chile who took a shot at your ambassador's residence the night before last. Are you aware of the incident?"

"Of course," says Scherrer, further perplexed. "That's all people talk about at the embassy. But we had no idea it was a Cuban."

"Well, that is our information," says Contreras. "We believe it was a second Cuban striking out in protest against our picking up the first Cuban."

"What is the second Cuban's name?" asks Scherrer.

"We don't know," says Contreras. "We are still looking for him."

"Oh," says Scherrer. "I guess the first Cuban will probably tell you who the second one is."

"He probably would have," says Contreras, "except that we released him when we found out he was not Otero. We are trying to relocate him now."

"I see," says Scherrer, whose mind is literally spinning toward the conclusion that Contreras's story makes no sense. But he is off balance. He is not completely sure. In any case, he knows he is not in a position to challenge Contreras, to call him a liar. He has no proof. He can't even back up his report that Otero has already been arrested, because to do so he would have to cite Baeza's detectives. Contreras would want to talk with them. They would back down. Scherrer would have broken the rules.

For the next half hour, Scherrer asks questions about two Cubans he does not believe exist, offering to have their names run through the Bureau's terrorist files. Contreras, for his part, asks Scherrer who he thinks the other Cubans might be. They speculate at length on these matters, and in the end Contreras is looking for three Cubans instead of one.

Scherrer goes back to his hotel. That night, a strange woman calls his room and makes a number of social propositions, all of which involve Scherrer's leaving the hotel after curfew. He declines and then stares at the telephone, thinking it all quite bizarre. He is certain, at least, that he has captured Contreras's attention. The next day he reports back to Baeza, and the general assures him that Contreras will pursue the search for Otero. Later, in private, his detectives laugh at Scherrer's account of the Contreras meeting. They are certain, beyond a doubt, that Otero has been arrested. In fact, they know where he is. As to the story of the two extra Cubans, they are divided on its meaning. Some think it is simply a dose of confusion from Contreras. Others think Contreras was fishing for the name of the FBI's informant.

Scherrer reports the unhappy news to his own embassy, where Ambassador David Popper and his deputy, Thomas Boyatt, have become preoccupied with the Otero case for unusual diplomatic reasons. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger will soon arrive in Chile for the OAS Foreign Ministers' Conference, and Kissinger is sensitive about Cuban exile terrorists in light of Orlando Bosch's recent arrest in Costa Rica. Bosch has now disappeared again. The ambassador and Boyatt would be nervous enough about Secretary Kissinger's



visit even if they did not know that Cuban terrorists were in Chile and in contact with the same Chilean security organization that is supposed to protect Kissinger's life there. Finally, they authorize Scherrer to try a gambit so daring they do not dream of telling their superiors in the State Department. Scherrer does not tell FBI headquarters, either. He knows the proposal would send the entire Bureau into an inconclusive flutter for months.

On May 6, Scherrer joins three embassy officials for a ride to the DINA compound, where they meet with their counterparts in DINA security. There is serious business on the agenda. The DINA officers want American assistance in providing security, not only for Kissinger, but also for the other foreign ministers and related dignitaries who will soon descend on Santiago. They have prepared a list of requests. First of all, they want a dozen metal detectors, such as are used at airports, for deployment at the entrances of the various buildings that will house the OAS conference.

"Excuse me," Scherrer interrupts, less than a minute into the DINA presentation. "I want to raise one very important matter before we go any further. The FBI has information that a Cuban terrorist named Rolando Otero is in Chile. We believe he is in DINA custody. Colonel Contreras told me the information was incorrect, but that was several days ago, and we believe he may be in DINA custody now. We also have information that Orlando Bosch is in Chile. We consider either of these men a threat to Secretary Kissinger's life. So far, this matter reflects poorly on DINA's abilities as an intelligence and security organization. If DINA cannot account for these two men, who have records of terrorist violence and who as Cubans would certainly stand out in Santiago, then the FBI will have to recommend that the secretary not come to Chile. Ambassador Popper agrees fully, and he has authorized me to tell you that without that accounting he will not allow Kissinger to come into the country. Basically, that's it: no Otero, no Kissinger. I wanted to tell you now so that we don't waste our time here if the secretary is not coming."

The man in charge of the DINA delegation\* stares at Scherrer with his mouth partially open. He stares at his colleagues and then back at Scherrer. Without a word, he stands up and makes a T sign with his hands for time out. He leaves the room, which is across the DINA compound from Contreras's office.

Fifteen minutes later, the colonel returns and sits down. His face

\*Lieutenant Colonel Luis Mujica.

shows signs of an extraordinary burden. "Top secret," he says in English. "We have him. Otero. We can't release him to you right now because we're using him to try to lure Bosch back into the country. As for Bosch, he is not here. He has left Chile. We thought you would have known that."

"Well, I don't know where he is, but we have information that he has been in Chile," says Scherrer.

"Not now," says the colonel. "We want to lure him back so we can deal with him." The colonel draws his forefinger very deliberately across his throat.

"I see," says Scherrer. "Well, I presume I will get Otero in a reasonable period of time."

"We'll try to hurry," says the colonel.

"Very good," says Scherrer, and the officers return to technical security matters almost as though nothing has happened.

Scherrer waits in Santiago more than a week. He goes to see General Baeza every day. The game is much more aboveboard now that DINA has admitted having Otero. But not completely. On one occasion, Baeza's military aide\* stops Scherrer just outside the general's door. "It's going to be very difficult to turn Otero over to you," he says softly. "Will it be acceptable to have him dead?"

Scherrer blinks. His first thought is that the anteroom is bugged. "No," he says. "We want him for a trial."

"Well," says the aide, "Otero is a terrorist and a desperate man. If he resists us, our people will answer with deadly force."

Alone with Baeza, Scherrer decides not to mention the exchange in the anteroom. Baeza would never engage in that sort of conversation himself, he decides, but he might have put his aide up to it.

In any case, the conversation and the delay indicate that the struggle is not over inside the Chilean government. Freshly worried, Ambassador Popper and Boyatt help Scherrer spread the word around Santiago that DINA has promised to give Otero up. Press censorship favors their task: they don't have to fret about newspaper leaks because they know reporters are too frightened of DINA to write anything about Contreras. The Americans do what they can to keep up the pressure. By the time pressing business calls Scherrer back to Buenos Aires, they have begun to stall on preparations for the OAS conference, less than three weeks away.

\*Lieutenant Colonel Jorge Aro.



One morning, Otero is summoned from his cell and blindfolded. Something big is happening. He can hear other prisoners moving around, too, and there is a lot of noise. Wagons are outside, and water is being splashed everywhere. They seem to be cleaning out the cells, and for that Otero is more thankful than he would have thought possible.

Suddenly he is being pushed along. Then he has to climb up in the back of something that turns out to be a truck. Many other prisoners are there. All of them smell bad. The guards warn the prisoners not to take off their blindfolds and not to make any noise. Then the door closes and the truck moves off. Otero cannot tell whether a guard is in the back with the prisoners or not.

The truck drives along forever, it seems. Then, after more walking in the herd, Otero is amazed to discover that he is back in his old cell. He yells along with everybody else who wants to know what the hellish ride was all about. The guards laugh. They say there is a big OAS conference coming up, and Chile agreed to allow an OAS Human Rights Commission team into its prisons for an inspection, to verify that Chile would be a suitable host. The commission visited the prison that day; the guards served as the prisoners.

A few days later, DINA officers appear outside Otero's cell to notify him that he will soon be released—deported to Peru. After that, he will be on his own. He will be leaving the next day. But nothing happens for a week. Finally, Otero summons a guard and tells him to pass along a message: he will not eat until he reaches Peru, as promised. His hunger strike is three days old when the guards blindfold him again and lead him out of the cell. Strange voices tell him he is bound for Lima.

A phone call wakes Scherrer at 2 a.m. on May 19, just four days after he has left Santiago. A voice says, "My Aunt Dina has a package for you."

Scherrer sits up in bed. The voice is familiar, and the message is cryptic but not difficult. "When?" he asks.

"Today," says the Investigations detective. "You better get over here right away."

By ten that morning, Scherrer has exchanged several cables with FBI headquarters and made plane reservations for three. (A DEA agent in Santiago has agreed to go along.) He has also gathered some special equipment for his overnight bag: handcuffs, a black-jack, a can of mace, and a few plastic spoons for the prisoner to eat

with. Just before he leaves for the airport, the detective calls back to say that the package has been delivered. "I don't like the way he looks," he says. "He's dirty. I think he's been abused. I don't think he's gonna be too stable."

Thus warned, Scherrer flies to Santiago and goes straight to Investigations. The detectives take him to General Baeza's office. In the anteroom outside, they explain that the general has a special ceremony for expulsions from the country. They coach Scherrer on his lines and then send him in to face General Baeza and his tape recorder, which is running. The general announces that he has apprehended a fugitive from American justice and asks Scherrer what the United States would have him do.

Scherrer is soon at Pudahuel Airport, standing with the DEA agent in the doorway of a Braniff jet. He is trying not to let the moment get the best of him. Like most people involved in intelligence work, he fears naïveté and takes a certain pleasure in knowing about sordid realities far beneath the surface of public events. In many respects, he is a hard-eyed fatalist who holds very little sacred. His hero is Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who tried to view society as a harsh compact among animals. Still, having defined his own ground, Scherrer knows that he has never in twenty years with the Bureau put his intelligence training to such good use. He has never really arrested anybody like this or struck such a blow against the kind of sickening violence he has endured in Argentina. He is very proud to be an FBI agent.

Otero begins to tremble when he sees that the car is veering away from the Aeroperú jet toward the Braniff one, and he trembles all the way up the stairway.

"He's all yours. Keep the handcuffs," says the detective, handing Scherrer the key. Otero sees a blond man in a suit and knows he must be from the FBI. Scherrer sees a small, disheveled, unshaven man and knows he is the right terrorist.

He pushes Otero down into a window seat in the fourth row and buckles his seat belt. Then he identifies himself to the prisoner by name and title, and begins to explain why Otero has been delivered to the FBI. "I know," Otero interrupts. "You don't have to tell me."\*

\*Otero recalls the greeting quite differently, claiming that Scherrer said the following: "You son-of-a-bitch. I'm FBI, and I'm gonna take your ass back to the United States, and as soon as we land in Miami I'm gonna arrest you and throw your ass in jail. You're nothing but a terrorist and a loser, and I've nailed you."



Scherrer takes a breath, stands up, and turns his attention to the DEA agent, who is remonstrating with a passenger just across the aisle. The agent wants the passenger to move one row back so that he can watch Otero better, but the passenger, a businessman from New York, says he has paid for the seat he already occupies.

Otero silences the argument. He has reached around to unbuckle his seat belt, despite his handcuffs, and he has jumped to his feet, his back against the window. Suddenly he lets it go—all the fear in the airport and the terror and the jails and the betrayals. And the hatred of the FBI. "*Maricón!*" he screams, calling Scherrer a faggot. He screams it again and again. It is the shriek of a madman.

Still screaming, he kicks Scherrer two or three times in the leg when Scherrer tries to knock him back down in the seat. Otero stays up, bracing himself against the plane's bulkhead so as not to lose his balance. He is wiry, in paratrooper condition, and the flow of adrenaline makes up for all the days without food. He keeps screaming even after Scherrer kicks his feet out from under him.

Scherrer jumps into the seat on top of Otero, who bucks upward with such strength that Scherrer is thrown into the air. Otero has gone berserk, moving in every direction at once and screaming all the while. When Scherrer tries to clamp his right hand over Otero's mouth to stop the noise, Otero jerks his head and bites down into the knucklebone. Scherrer moans. Desperately, he tries to wrench his hand out of Otero's mouth. Many passengers are screaming.

The DEA agent vaults over the back of the seat onto Otero's chest, weighing him down with his two hundred pounds. Scherrer reaches into his coat pocket for the blackjack, and he begins pounding Otero on the bony parts of his legs and arms. After five or six hard blows, the fight leaves Otero as suddenly as it came. Scherrer feels the body go limp and finally pulls his hand from Otero's mouth.

He stands up and notices that blood is coming out of his hand in spurts. Some passengers are still screaming. One or two have vomited, and several will soon leave the aircraft for another flight. The pilot and all the flight attendants have entered the cabin. Quickly the flight attendants try to calm the passengers. One of them begins wrapping wet towels around Scherrer's hand. Another one brings Cokes. The DEA agent puts one to Otero's lips. He and Scherrer keep telling Otero to take it easy.

They also keep telling the pilot that everything will be okay. Scherrer's great fear is that the pilot will order them off the plane, as is his prerogative. Instead, the pilot winds up ordering that the rear-most eight rows of the plane be cleared for the trio. That way, he

says, Otero can do anything he wants to and the agents will have room to control him.

Otero rises calmly when beckoned toward the rear, but suddenly he cries, "The FBI knocked out my teeth! The FBI knocked out my teeth!"

The New York businessman yells, "You goddamn terrorist! I wish the FBI had knocked out *all* your teeth!"

Scherrer pushes Otero toward the back. On the way, Otero screams, "There's a bomb on this plane! A bomb's about to go off! You're all gonna die!" His cries subside when Scherrer jerks the handcuffs upward from behind.

A flight attendant later collects Otero's watch and one of his teeth. Scherrer believes the tooth came from a dental bridge. He knows he is the one bleeding, not Otero.

In the air, a woman passenger walks back to thank Scherrer. She has a parrot on board that she is smuggling back to the United States, and the commotion helped save her from detection. She is very grateful.

Eight hours and fifteen minutes later, the jet will land in Miami. An ambulance and a throng of anxious law-enforcement officers will be there to meet it, drawn by the pilot's radio message about the wounded FBI agent on board.

Three weeks later, on June 11, Ricardo Morales will be so angry with his FBI handler for ruining his undercover operation in Chile and his reputation in DISIP that he will draw a policeman aside at a party. It was an FBI agent, he will say, who tipped Otero off that he should leave the United States. This offhand remark will entangle the FBI and the police and the United States Attorney's Office for months in obligatory internal investigations.

Three days after Morales's comment, Orlando Bosch, Frank Castro, and the leaders of half a dozen other Cuban exile groups will meet in the Dominican Republic to form their alliance, known as CORU. Afterward, Bosch will make his way back to Caracas, where Morales and Orlando García will meet him at the airport.

In July, anti-Castro Cuban exiles will retaliate against Chile for the expulsion of Otero, as promised. They will try unsuccessfully to bomb a 1975 Mercedes belonging to the Chilean embassy in Bogotá, Colombia—license number CD0064—and on July 24, they will bomb the Chilean Pavilion at Bogotá's International Exposition, injuring six people.

In August, Morales will ignore subpoenas to testify at Otero's



trial. A federal jury will acquit Otero on all charges relating to the nine bombings in Miami. Scherrer, a witness, will take time to see a doctor before flying back to Buenos Aires. His hand will still be swollen and festering after three months. He will be back in Argentina a month later when the bomb goes off in Sheridan Circle.

November 30, 1976–March 4, 1977

## 9 CORNICK'S DOWNFALL

Scherrer arrived in Santiago with bittersweet memories of the MIBOM case. He would most likely be called again to testify at Otero's second trial, in state court, and he did not relish the prospect of another long journey to Florida. It would mean more days of waiting at the pleasure of trial lawyers. He would be denounced again by Cuban spectators who would see him as the FBI ogre who not only framed an anti-Communist hero but also knocked out his teeth. Otero was a terrorist to Scherrer, but he was a public hero to thousands of Cubans. He had been lionized in the media by civic leaders and elected officials, including the mayor of Miami. Scherrer expected another acquittal. His bloody hand and all his work would go for nothing.

He had a backlog of leads from headquarters. There were requests to verify source reports on various aspects of Letelier's life in Chile. There were half a dozen Cuban exiles who might have traveled to Chile; Scherrer was supposed to find out. And there were numerous fragmentary descriptions of Chileans who might have threatened Elizabeth Ryden at Kennedy Airport. Most of these came from Chilean exiles in the United States who had been imprisoned by the junta and had later made contact with Saul Landau at IPS. One of them remembered being tortured by a man known only as Colonel Robles. The source could provide only a partial description of the colonel. He could remember no first name, and Robles might be a false name, of course. Scherrer's job was to find out if such a person existed in Chile, and, if so, to learn more about him.