

# THIS IS HOW IT WAS DONE

SAUL LANDAU and RALPH STAVINS

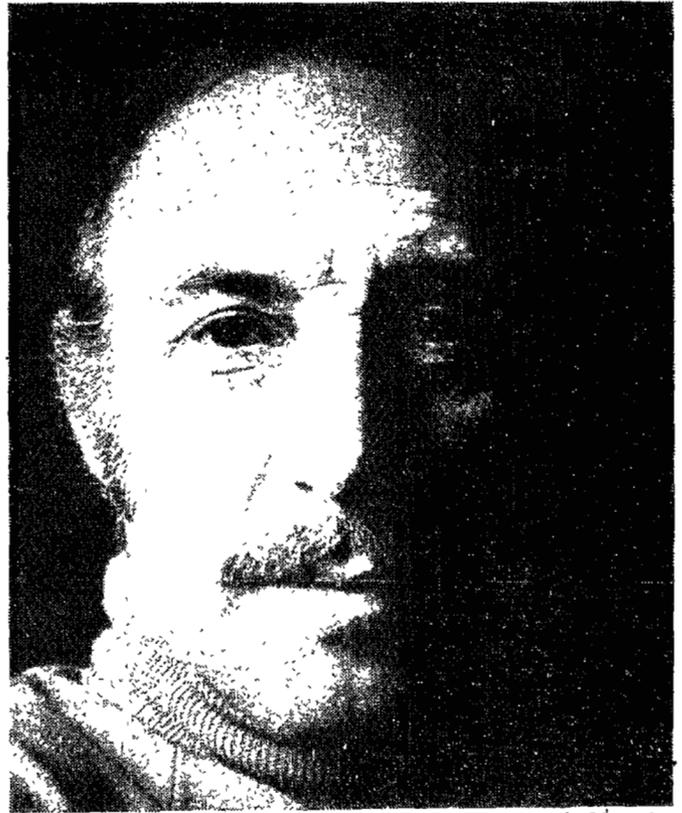
Six months have passed since Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt were murdered on Embassy Row in Washington. No arrests or indictments have occurred. From our own investigation, published reports and Justice Department sources the names of several of the suspected assassins are known. From independent evidence that we have gathered, the suspects' motives and key details of the crime have emerged. The FBI and Justice Department findings concur in crucial detail with the conclusions drawn from our inquiry.

The actual plot for the murder began during a debate within the Chilean junta in June 1976. Letelier had received a letter from a reliable source which described this discussion. The question arose whether or not to assassinate Letelier, whom all members of the ruling council judged a danger to the regime. Gen. Augusto Pinochet made special reference to Letelier's public attempts to isolate and denigrate the ruling junta—his part in blocking a \$63-million Dutch investment, his testimony before the United Nations and other world bodies about torture in Chile, his relationships with members of Congress and State Department officials (Letelier lunched from time to time with William Rogers, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, and had close contact with outspoken legislative critics of the junta, Senators Kennedy, McGovern, Abourezk and Humphrey, and Congressmen Fraser, Miller, Moffett and Harkin); his influence at international banking and lending agencies (Letelier was an economist and a former high official of the Inter-American Development Bank). Letelier stood for the Chilean law and constitution, for human rights and reason—in a word, legitimacy, underlined by his presence in Washington. All the junta had to rule with was terror.

The "moderates" around the Santiago decision-making table argued that, while Letelier constituted a clear and present danger, his assassination at that time would not augur well for future relations with Washington. The "hards" said, "kill him; the United States is soft on communism anyway." They no longer felt concerned over possible U.S. reaction to assassinations. They already felt betrayed.

The moderates prevailed. Instead of assassination a compromise was agreed upon: Letelier was stripped of his Chilean nationality by a junta decree. This decision, reached in June, was not published in the official *Gazette* until September 10, 1976.

Several elements entered into the junta debate. The most important factor was that, contrary to the public impression, U.S.-Chilean relations had suffered a steady decline over the previous year. Because of flagrant and well-documented violations of human rights, the U.S. Congress began to reduce the large benefits it had been



Marcelo Montecino

granting to the junta since the overthrow of Allende. Congress stopped all military aid, sharply cut back economic aid, and inserted human rights provisions into aid legislation. From a 1975 peak of \$273 million, U.S. aid was halved in fiscal 1976 and halved again for fiscal 1977. Three members of Congress and their staffs traveled to Chile and, upon their return home, gave eyewitness accounts of the horrors of daily life under the military dictatorship. In addition to such open condemnation of the regime by Congressional leaders, the Ford administration voted in early 1976 to denounce Chile at the United Nations for its systematic violation of human rights, and the State Department through the U.S. Embassy in Santiago delivered signals of diplomatic disapproval.

The sum of these gestures did not indicate an impending break in relations; indeed, one could interpret them as messages to mend one's brutal ways. But the junta responded with puerile rebelliousness. Its leaders, realizing that Congress was determined to cut their aid significantly, boasted that they didn't want it anyway. Chile's economic minister announced that Chile needed no more foreign loans, since the Chilean economy was already glutted with foreign credit.

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*Saul Landau and Ralph Stavins were co-workers with Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. Landau, a film director (Fidel), is acting director of the Transnational Institute, IPS's international program. Stavins directs IPS's project on official illegality.*

The Chilean press increased its attacks upon liberal U.S. legislators. Senator Kennedy was branded a Communist leader and cartoons in the junta-controlled Santiago dailies portrayed other powerful Senators conspiring against the junta, with Mrs. Hortensia Allende, the slain President's widow, goading them on.

Pablo Rodriguez, leader of the ultra-Right *Patria y Libertad* movement, asked on Chilean TV, "Why has Chile become an electoral banner used in the U.S. to win votes? I believe it is because to a great extent international communism has been attracting those nations where eventually there might be a conflict." Détente, according to officials in Chile, had proved that the United States could no longer be trusted. (Shortly after the murders, former Chilean Ambassador Manuel Trucco, responding to Presidential candidate Carter's attack on the junta and U.S. involvement in the coup, wrote Carter warning that his advisers were Marxist dupes.)

Letelier's published writings continued to throw doubt on the junta's economic and political legitimacy. In the August 28, 1976, issue of the *The Nation*, he published an article, "Chile: Economic 'Freedom's' Awful Toll," which connected the campaign of state terror to the junta-Milton Friedman economic model. Despite the ubiquitous terror, Letelier concluded, the generals showed no capacity to mold a viable economy, and future investment in Chile was foolhardy.

On September 10, 1976, Letelier learned of the decree stripping him of his nationality. At a scheduled speech at Madison Square Garden, New York, he gave his reply: "I was born a Chilean, I am a Chilean and I will die a Chilean. They, the Fascists, were born traitors, live as traitors, and will be remembered forever as Fascist traitors." The overflow crowd roared its approval. DINA agents attended the rally and reported to Santiago.

We believe that General Pinochet and his DINA chief, Manuel Contreras, called a special meeting to discuss these, for them, unfavorable recent events. This time the moderates lost. Pinochet ordered DINA to "hit" on Embassy Row in Washington, D.C. as Pinochet's "symbolic" response both to Letelier's resistance and to the United States' "betrayal" of its promised support.

From several sources inside the U.S. Government, we have learned that a high-level DINA official was instructed to conspire with Cuban exiles in the United States for the actual killing. The DINA-exile connection, by then many months old, had come about as naturally as a marriage between Mafia families. Shortly after the 1973 coup, Col. Eduardo Sepulveda, a close friend of Pinochet, was dispatched to Miami to meet with Cuban exile leaders. Ramiro de la Fé, a Bay of Pigs veteran who had served time for possession of explosives, and who was a spokesman for several terrorist groupings, consulted with Sepulveda and helped him set up a front group in the United States to promote the junta's image. In return, according to former exile activist, Carlos Rivero Collado,\* Sepulveda promised moral and ma-

terial aid in the exiles' private war against Castro and the Cuban Revolution.

In early 1974, the junta blessed the arrangement by sending Julio Duran to deliver a keynote speech before the exile community in Miami. Duran, Chile's delegate to the U.N. General Assembly and a leading figure in *Patria y Libertad*, promised the exiles that henceforth, Chile would support their cause.

The exiles, most of whom the CIA had abandoned because of periodic policy changes and the fallout from Watergate, became the junta's adopted sons. The junta and the exiles shared the same enemies and ideology. Chile, not the United States, was dedicated to the overthrow of Castro; Chile, not the United States, was now the hemispheric leader in the struggle against international communism; Chile, not the United States, was willing to use terror as a routine tool of policy. The exiles had new parents, and, judging from the frequency of their visits to Chile, a new home. In 1975 Brigade 2506, composed of Bay of Pigs veterans, awarded Pinochet its "medal of freedom."

According to Carlos Rivero Collado, from 1974 to 1976 the Cuban exile terrorist groups, with Chilean moral and material aid, launched a number of violent attacks in and out of this country. Their targets included not only the Cuban Revolution but some of their newly defined enemies in the United States. In one incident, Emilio Milian, a Miami-based Cuban exile, who advocated détente with Cuba, had his legs severed when a C4 bomb exploded in his car, the identical method used later to eliminate Letelier. (For details of atrocities committed by Cuban exiles in the recent past, see "Miami, Haven for Terror," *The Nation*, March 19.)

Our evidence indicates that a high-level DINA agent landed in Miami on September 13, 1976, and met with a group of Cuban exiles who had already been alerted that a "contract" was in the offing. The DINA agent worked out the details of the Letelier assassination with four young terrorists noted for their daring and cold-bloodedness. Having secured a plastic explosive and a detonating device, they departed for Washington. There they met with DINA agents, posing as Chilean officials, stationed at the Chilean Embassy. The Washington-based operatives briefed the exiles on Letelier's habits, his car description, daily departure times, route to work, parking location, and probable work schedule at the Institute for Policy Studies during the following week.

The next afternoon, Justice Department sources confirm, a group of Cubans made an official call upon their Chilean Ambassador, Manuel Trucco, to "protest" the extradition of Rolando Otero, a fellow Cuban exile, from Chile to the United States, there to stand trial for bombings in the Miami area. This visit to the Chilean Embassy could serve in the future, should it be necessary, to explain their presence in Washington.

Upon leaving the Chilean Embassy, they probably drove to an alley behind the Institute for Policy Studies, where Letelier routinely parked his car. The explosive was taped to the I-beam of the car, under the driver's seat, for maximum impact. The car may have been

\* Carlos Rivero Collado was active in Cuban exile affairs until he recently returned to Cuba, revealing all he knew of exile politics.

driven to test whether the plastic would remain in place. Just the day before a set of Letelier's car keys had been stolen from his office and when Letelier arrived at his car at 6:30 that evening, one of his companions pointed out that the right front door was ajar. He shrugged it off, saying, "Oh, I must have gotten out on the wrong side today."

The next morning Letelier drove to National Airport, parked his car for the day, and took an Eastern shuttle to New York. He returned on Saturday for a party at his house to celebrate Chilean Independence Day.

Monday, the day before the assassination, Letelier worked at his office. At the end of the day, he phoned Isabel, his wife, confirming a dinner-work engagement at home for that evening with Michael and Ronni Moffitt. When Moffitt discovered that his own car would not start, Letelier phoned again explaining that the Moffitts would drive with him. They stayed until midnight, and then drove Letelier's car to their own home, it being agreed that they would pick him up and drive to work together the next morning.

At 8:45 Tuesday morning, a Latin woman walking in front of Letelier's residence noticed a late-model gray sedan parked near the Letelier driveway. Three occupants sat inside and one man stood by the car. She identified him as "certainly a Latin," about 30, wearing a gray suit and tie. The four appeared to be enjoying an "inside joke," she said.

At 8:55 the Moffitts arrived in the Letelier car, and pulled into Letelier's driveway. Engaged in conversation, they did not notice any other vehicles nearby. As soon as they entered the Letelier residence, one of the group of four must have crawled under Letelier's car and attached the detonating device to the plastic charge—a procedure that requires only seconds.

At 9:15, Letelier, Ronni and Michael Moffitt left the house and began the drive from Bethesda to the District of Columbia. Letelier took the route he always drove—River Road to 46th to Massachusetts Avenue. They talked about the day's business and the dreary weather. No one paid attention to a gray sedan trailing them at a "safe" distance.

As Letelier entered Sheridan Circle, a hand in the gray car depressed a button. Michael Moffitt heard the sound

of "water on a hot wire" and then saw a "white flash." Thrown clear of the explosion, Moffitt tried to free the unconscious Letelier from the wreckage on top of him. His legs had been snapped from his body and catapulted some 15 feet away. Ronni Moffitt stumbled away from the smoldering Chevrolet; she seemed to be O.K., but in fact had suffered a severed artery and soon bled to death. Michael screamed out into the world, "The Chilean Fascists have done this."

This reconstruction of the assassinations, based upon evidence gleaned in six months of probing and with some educated guessing, is supported by what we know of FBI findings. In crucial areas, our conclusions and those of the Justice Department match exactly: a DINA official, himself under orders from "above," ordered and supervised the "hit"; Cuban terrorists carried it out; plastic explosive was the murder instrument.

Most of the FBI and Justice Department officials investigating the murders have made a concerted effort to bring the perpetrators to the bar of justice. At the same time, other agents inside the government have leaked material from Letelier's briefcase, seized by the police as potential evidence at the time of the explosion. The leaked material first appeared on the desks of several officials of the Inter-American Development Bank, where Letelier had served for many years. Next, the briefcase material was given to newspaper columnists Jack Anderson and then to Evans and Novak. The columns which these men wrote attempted to discredit Letelier and divert attention from the actual killers—General Pinochet, the Chilean junta, the DINA and their Cuban exile hit men.

The names of most of the killers, their motives, and their *modus operandi* are now known to the Justice Department. What remains are the more fundamental questions: will the U.S. authorities be allowed to gather sufficient evidence to bring the killers to trial? Will they name General Pinochet and other ruling junta members who ordered the assassinations? And will the role of U.S. intelligence and defense agencies, which had previously trained junta leaders, DINA agents and the exiles, be revealed in full? □

## FIRST-STRIKE CAPABILITY

# FROM MARV TO HOLOCAUST

## ROBERT C. ALDRIDGE

"I am a little mixed up on these MARVs," confessed Sen. Thomas McIntyre, research and development chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, during military budget hearings last March. It is a pointed example of how the Pentagon has mystified the issues surrounding its new Maneuvering Re-entry Vehicle

(MARV). If the Congressional purse-keepers, with access to secret information, don't understand what they are buying, the general public certainly can't. And to compound the confusion, the Air Force and Navy have again switched their stories. They seem determined to outmaneuver public understanding. To clarify this picture, I propose first to review the evolution of ballistic missiles which led up to MARVs; then to analyze MARV

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