Power and Control: The Forgotten Tale of Cuban Exile Violence, 1960-1976

Abstract
In the 1970s, dozens of innocent civilians throughout the U.S. and Latin America fell victim to a wave of violence perpetrated by anti-communist and anti-Castro Cuban exile extremists who engaged in acts of terrorism in the name of Cuban liberation. This violence, though it claimed the lives of many, has largely been forgotten by the exile community, and textual evidence suggests that many Cuban-Americans supported the terrorists, lauding them as heroes and patriots. However, further analysis of exile newspapers and other sources reveals that violence and hegemonic discourse precluded the reality of exile politics and public opinion, which was far more varied and complex. In many ways, the politics of the diaspora itself were controlled through violence, creating a volatile environment were dissenting opinions were met with threats and, sometimes, death.

Introduction

On July 17, 1990, against the recommendation of the United States Justice Department, and arguably, American popular opinion, President George H. W. Bush granted the release of a Cuban exile languishing in New York's Metropolitan Correctional Center, saving him from deportation.[1] This decision came after heavy lobbying from Miami-based supporters and politicians, including the Cuban-American Republican congressional candidate, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and her campaign manager and future Florida Governor, Jeb Bush.[2] The exile, Dr. Orlando Bosch Ávila, a former pediatrician, would soon join the hundreds of thousands of Cubans who had achieved residency in the United States after decamping from their home country following the 1959 Revolution. However, Bosch's case, well-known to both scholars and members of the Cuban diaspora, was strikingly different. Thirteen years prior to President Bush's intervention, Bosch, along with six others, had been implicated in the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455, which resulted in the deaths of all 73 passengers and crew members on board, including, most famously, the entire Cuban national fencing team.[3] The unprecedented attack took place in early October of 1976, and before the end of the

[1] James Lemoyne, "Cuban Linked to Terror Bombings Is Freed by Government in Miami," *New York Times,* July 18, 1990.
[2] Jeffery Schmalz, "Furor Over Castro Foe's Fate Puts Bush on Spot in Miami," *New York Times,* August 16, 1989.
[3] Greg Chamberlain, "Cuban exiles 'bombed jet,'" *The Guardian,* October 8, 1976.

month, the *Coordinación de Organizaciones Revolucionarias Unidas* (CORU), a conglomerate of various anti-Castro terrorist organizations led by Bosch, publicly claimed responsibility for the act.[4] Bosch and his co-conspirators were acquitted of the bombing by a Venezuelan court, but continued to publicly voice his support for violent resistance to Castro. The Justice Department confirmed his involvement in 30 acts of sabotage between 1961 and 1986 and determined that Bosch had "repeatedly expressed and demonstrated a willingness to cause indiscriminate injury and death."[5] Flight 455 was only one of a slew of exile extremist-engineered bombings and assassinations that racked both North and South America between 1960 and 1990, over 50 of which have been attributed to CORU alone.[6] South Florida and the Caribbean were perhaps the most affected areas, with over a hundred bombs exploding in Miami between 1973 and 1976.[7] Civilians, including exiles, were often collateral victims as well as targets.

Yet, Bosch's release was widely anticipated in Miami. In August of 1989, almost a year before Bosch was pardoned, a significant number of businesses in Miami's Hialeah suburb closed their doors to demonstrate solidarity with the exile.[8] The *New York Times* reported rallies and hunger strikes in that area, as well. Of course, Cuban-Americans had previously organized protests in support of their compatriots, but the purpose was usually the safe admittance of groups of migrants, such as had occurred in April of 1980 when 10,000 Cuban exiles became trapped in the Peruvian embassy in Havana.[9] Bosch was a far more controversial figure, and at the national level, President Bush's decision to grant not only the release, but the U.S. residency, to a known radical terrorist while formally denouncing terrorism to the nation would soon become difficult to justify. However, that was clearly not how the Cuban exile community understood it, and support for Bosch became

[4] Ann Louise Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins," *The Atlantic,* November, 2006.
[5] Schmalz, "Furor Over Castro Foe's Fate."
[6] "U.S. to expel Castro enemy because of terrorism record," *Orlando Sentinel*, June 24, 1989.
[7] María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in Southern Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 141.
[8] Schmalz, "Furor Over Castro Foe's Fate."
[9] Jo Thomas, "Miamians Rally to Back Cause of Castro Foes," *New York Times,* April 15, 1980.

apparent when the issue bled into state politics. During her campaign, Ros-Lehtinen and Jeb Bush raised $265,000 for Bosch's defense fund and formulated a successful platform lobbying for his freedom. With exile support, they ultimately defeated opponent Gerald Richman, making Ros-Lehtinen the first Cuban-American elected to Congress.[10] Of his serendipitous freedom, Bosch himself told journalists cryptically, "they purchased the chain, but they don't have the monkey."[11]

The purpose of including this anecdote is not to somehow expose the entire Cuban diaspora as morally corrupt supporters of terrorism. Rather, this story is one reflection of Cuban exiles' intriguing relationship with those members of their community that adopted the most radical methods in the struggle for *liberación cubana*. As common knowledge would suggest, Cuban exiles and their recent descendants were, and continue to be, overwhelmingly anti-Castro. Cubans who elected to leave the island in the first decade after the revolution were primarily, but by no means exclusively, middle-class, white families who feared for the safety of their children under the new regime and had both the means and connections to leave. Though this initial out-migration included Cubans who had no objections to, and possibly even supported, the Batista dictatorship, they were soon joined by former members of the 26 of July Movement and other *antibatistianos* who had become disillusioned with Castro's revolution, including individuals like Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles—another infamous exile terrorist and Bosch's occasional partner. For the average exile, this experience translated into a political tendency towards the right, and once they earned their citizenship, they became a voting bloc for the Republican party to court, but this was not always true. Historians have long argued against the myth of the Cuban exile political monolith. We know now, thanks to seminal studies by historian María Cristina García and sociologist María de los Angeles Torres, that portions of the population were much farther to the political left than expected, and even those who were not,

[10] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[11] Lemoyne, "Cuban Linked to Terror Bombings."

often prioritized unity over violent anti-Castroism.[12] Put simply, to say Cuban exiles were largely, and vehemently, anti-Castro would be correct; to say they supported any and all anti-Castro terrorist activities, would not be. Why, then, did exile terrorists seem to garner such support and face relatively few consequences? More importantly: how did the exiles themselves come to understand these groups and their actions, especially when civilians, within and outside of the exile community, were so often the victims?

The terrorism of radical Cuban exile organizations, like CORU, has been the preoccupation of many long-form journalistic articles. Most of these were written in the wake of 9/11, when the worst terror attack in U.S. history forced journalists to reassess the country's relationship to terrorism. They discovered a clear, if highly complex, connection between the CIA and those militant members of the Cuban diaspora during the 1960s and 1970s that took part in covert anti-Castro operations—an upsetting reality for a nation which had convinced itself that there was no way terrorism could be an American-born phenomenon.[13] The unsavory relationship between the CIA and exile terrorism produced a wealth of sensational articles and books by journalists, especially while Bosch and Posada were still alive to interview.[14] The same cannot be said for the historiography of the Cuban diaspora, which, while rich, remains focused on Cuban exiles' socioeconomic integration into Miami, New York, and New Jersey, as well as the government-funded programs that helped them to do so—and for good reason.[15] Migration is a perpetually relevant phenomenon, and the

[12] García, *Havana USA*, 141.
[13] See Ann Louise Bardach *Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana* and Keith Bolender *Voices from the Other Side: An Oral History of Terrorism Against Cuba*.
[14] It has been a topic of interest for journalists reporting on exile terrorism to question the complicity of the FBI and the CIA in these acts of terror. As it stands, there is no evidence that implicates either the FBI or the CIA as directly responsible for such activities; however, as many journalists have noted and as the documents themselves confirm, the CIA provided substantial funding and employment for violent men like Luis Posada, and furthermore, was likely aware of plans for certain acts of terror, such as the bombing of Cubana Flight 455 and the gruesome assassination of the Chilean ambassador, Orlando Letelier. In acknowledging the close relationship between government agencies and terrorism, we can set aside the speculation, and focus instead on the victims of these attacks and the communities they affected.
[15] María de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States* and "Political Culture: The Exile Ideology and Electoral Politics" in Guillermo J. Grenier and Lisandro Pérez *The Legacy of Exile: Cubans in the United States* are both exceptions to this.

public and federal support given to those who fled Castro renders the Cuban case particularly exceptional. The historical literature does not ignore the reality of Cuban radical political organizations, nor how the U.S. Government financed and utilized them, but because most works only discuss these topics within the much larger framework of exile politics, or prioritize the CIA and US Government's collusion, little space is allotted to the acts of terrorism themselves and the way they were received by the exile community. The small number of books and articles by scholars devoted exclusively to Cuban exile political organizations and terrorism focus on the moral reprehensibility of the acts or the political ideology that drove them.[16] In summary, historians, more often than not, have studied exiles and exile political terrorism separately, but not the relationship between them.[17]

The political event with which I began this story, as well as many of the vignettes that follow, would indicate that the majority of Cuban-Americans readily viewed terrorists as patriots. The reality is far more complex. First, while textual evidence suggests that there was a concerted effort by the exile press to depict the authors of political violence as heroes of the community, this was not done because Cuban exiles uniformly supported a violent approach to anti-Castroism and anti-communism, but because challenging the tactics of the most visible members of the community risked opening fissures in an already divided diaspora. Whether or not exile leaders and journalists truly believed in what they were espousing is impossible to say with complete certainty, and ultimately inconsequential when we consider that this rhetoric existed and had real consequences even if those manufacturing it did not agree with it themselves. What does matter is that many Cuban-Americans clearly understood political unity as the path to liberating their homeland, even if such unity meant refraining from criticizing, if not participating in, acts of extreme brutality.

[16] See Michael J. Bustamante "Anti-Communist Anti-Imperialism?: Agrupación Abdala and the Shifting Contours of Cuban Exile Politics, 1968-1986" for a detailed analysis of an anti-Castro organization's ideology and José Quiroga "The Cuban Exile Wars: 1976-1981."
[17] See Alan McPherson "Caribbean Taliban: Cuban American Terrorism in the 1970s" for an analysis on the importance of exile terrorism in both the American and international contexts.

Secondly, exiles themselves, including those working for the press, had reason to fear becoming victims of terrorist attacks if they were to oppose the violence in any way, or even fail to adhere to the extremists' politics. The tragic cases of Emilio Milián, Jose Elias de la Torriente, and multiple other victims of assassinations or assassination attempts during the most volatile years are examples of this unfortunate reality.

The Cuban-American community in the 1960s and 70s was controlled both through hegemonic discourse as well as outright violence. This is significant in its own right, but it also makes any assessment of "true" exile public opinion inaccessible, and perhaps, irrelevant; this type of discourse, when produced and propagated through violence or other means, in effect, becomes the reigning public opinion. Of course, there was visible, vocal, and organized opposition to the violence, but this was the exception, rather than the norm. In order to understand how exiles processed the violence authored by members of their own community, we must consider the opinions that were not publicly reflected as well as those that were, and the consequences for individuals who objected to the use of violent tactics. Ultimately, the complex nature of exile attitudes towards anti-Castro terrorism reveals the salience of the exile community's likewise obsessive, conflicted, and enduring relationship with their homeland. While this makes an analysis of the topic difficult, it does not preclude, but rather fortifies its importance.

A Tale of Two Terrorists: Louis Posada and Orlando Bosch, 1959-1973

With topics as incendiary as the Cuban Revolution and terrorism, it is sometimes difficult to piece together the truth among the hearsay. The lives of key individuals like Bosch and Posada are murky, and laden with rumors and false accounts. Most of the available information comes from newspaper articles reporting on the arrests and alleged plots, though the details of their stories sometimes contradict each other and leave us with gaps. Stitching together a definitive narrative is not wholly possible, and many aspects of their exploits are unclear; however, tracing the contours of this history reveals several important things about our actors in this period: both Bosch and Posada

resorted to violence as early as the 1960s and, at least in the case of Bosch, had the very public support of the exile community from the start. The terrorists and the organizations they led would carry that support into the late 1970s, even as the violence intensified, and members of the diaspora themselves became victims.

The story of exile political violence begins in the months preceding the end of the Cuban Revolution. As discussed, many of the future exile extremists, including Orlando Bosch himself, fought alongside Castro as members of the 26 of July Movement. Bosch had entered into politics as a medical student at the University of Havana in the 1940s, where both he and Castro served on the University's student council, Bosch as president, Castro as a delegate from the law school. Both were anti-communist, and both detested the dictator, Batista.[18] It made sense, then, that Bosch would initially join the 26 of July Movement, becoming a leader of the movement in his home province of Cienfuegos.[19] However, he soon fell out with the Revolution as the communists within it grew in number and power.[20] Along with a group of men in the Escambray mountains, Bosch began conspiring against Castro in 1960.[21] A lack of supplies eventually forced the group to disband and relocate to Florida, where Bosch came into contact with the CIA when the Agency was recruiting exiles for covert operations, including the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. Bosch himself would not participate in the invasion, but many Cuban-American exiles who believed it was fully possible to retake their homeland did, and upon the operation's failure, did not give up that belief in the slightest. If anything, the failed invasion set a precedent that military struggle with American support, not dialogue or rapprochement, was the only avenue through which freedom could be brought to Cuba.

After the invasion, veterans split off into different factions, forming a range of exile political organizations, many of them militant and extremist in nature. Even after the resolution of the 1962

[18] Blake Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," *New Times,* 13 May 1977, 46.
[19] Heather Dewar, "Passion for Free Cuba Drove Bosch to Extreme," *Miami Herald,* June 29, 1989.
[20] Dewar, "Passion for Free Cuba Drove Bosch to Extreme."
[21] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 46.

Cuban Missile Crisis made an invasion of the island impossible, the CIA continued to formulate covert strategies that used extremist exiles to provoke an uprising within Cuba and provide these groups with the money and materials to do so. However, the Agency soon found it difficult to control the militant groups on their bankroll.[22] The number of splinter exile political organizations had only grown since 1961, and the groups themselves were highly unpredictable—exiles often conducted raids that had been previously canceled or executed their own without CIA approval. This became a threat to national security, especially if the unauthorized raids happened to target or destroy Soviet vessels, and the Coast Guard and British Navy both attempted to curtail exile activity in the Caribbean.[23] Funding was also scarce, and public criticism of the U.S. Government from the heads of these groups could lead the CIA to sever financial and strategic ties with them.[24] Militant exiles interpreted these behaviors as a lack of commitment on the part of the Americans to Cuban liberation—a feeling due in no small part to that initial betrayal during the Bay of Pigs—and continued to strike out on their own in struggle against Castro.

While the connection between the CIA and exile extremist groups in the early 1960s certainly contributed to their ability to carry out various operations, it is important to note that outright terrorism against civilians was not the result, nor did it seem to be the objective, of militant groups in this decade.[25] The goal of their operations seemed to be an internal counterrevolution within Cuba, since they were still of the mind that a significant portion of the Cuban people opposed Castro and longed to be free, although the failure of the Bay of Pigs should have demonstrated this was not exactly the case. Consequently, efforts were targeted primarily at the island itself. In 1960, Bosch boasted to the *Miami Herald* that his group, the *Movimiento Insurreccional de Recuperación*

[22] García, *Havana USA*, 126.
[23] García, *Havana USA*, 129.
[24] García, *Havana USA*, 131.
[25] The discussion of the CIA's potential complicacy in the formation exile terrorism is an interesting one and one that journalists have undertaken in the past few decades, but it is not a topic I have elected to engage directly with here. See Ann Louise Bardach's article "Twilight of the Assassins" and Bardach's book *Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana.*

Revolucionaria (MIRR), had infiltrated the ranks of the Cuban military. He claimed they had 100 of their men inside the army including four officers.[26] From the U.S., the MIRR also ran and publicly took credit for frequent aerial bombing raids on Cuban targets, usually sugar mills, oil refineries, and other production sites.[27] These tactics were ineffective at sparking the subversive uprising militant exiles so desired, but that hardly dampened the enthusiasm of Bosch and the MIRR, who continued to plot against Castro. In the next several years, his exploits, even though they were objectively failures, would gain the attention of the government, the police, the press, and the Cuban diaspora at large.

Throughout the 1960s, Bosch was in and out of jail. The *Miami Herald* scarcely published an issue without at least one article on the exile's fluctuating legal status.[28] In June of 1965, police arrested Bosch along with three other MIRR members, following a raid on a house by federal agents in Zellwood, Florida, on the charge of conspiring to export arms to Cuba.[29] The agents found 18 aerial bombs along with several small arms and ammunitions, which were presumably going to be used for another bombing raid or sent to MIRR affiliates on the island.[30] The exile community in Miami proved to be supportive of Bosch from early on; they protested his imprisonment after the raid and staged a march along Biscayne Boulevard with homemade signs bearing slogans like "We Ask for Liberty for Bosch and His Compatriots."[31] Bosch and the three other exiles were indicted by a federal grand jury that same month, but the indictment evidently did not stick and the group was later acquitted in 1966—an outcome that would become typical for the exile, who consistently had tremendous luck in the courtroom.[32]

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[26] George Southworth, "Anti Castro Foes Wait Word in Hills," *Miami Herald,* August 10, 1960, 8.
[27] "Plane Strafes, Bombs Sugar Mill in Cuba," *Miami Herald,* August 17, 1960, 2.
[28] A November 22, 1964 article described him as the "frequently jailed leader of anti-Castro Cuban exiles." See "Exile Chief Still Pushes for Probe: Anti Fidel Group Blocked, He Says" *Miami Herald* November 22, 1964.
[29] "Exile Protest," *Miami Herald,* June 14, 1965 13.
[30] "Exile Protest," 13.
[31] "Exile Protest," 13.
[32] The charges were cleared partially because Bosch testified that a man named William Johnson (who was apparently a paid informer from the government against Bosch) proposed that the MIRR bomb a Havana oil refinery and offered to provide materials for doing so. See "Castro Foe Cleared of Bomb Plot," *Miami Herald,* June 5, 1966, 46.

In November of 1965, Bosch was arrested again, this time on the charge of attempting to extort $20,000 from other anti-Castro exiles. In a series of letters, Bosch and Marcelino Jimenez, another MIRR officer, allegedly threatened injury or death to the recipients and their families unless they paid up.[33] The money, the letters said, would finance future anti-Castro subversion efforts. Bosch and Jimenez were indicted and pleaded not guilty, however, Bosch was never formally tried on the charges, as he would be arrested again for that could happen. Although it is impossible to know for certain if the MIRR did threaten the lives of other exiles for money, it is still significant that this would have been one of the earliest instances of threatened violence against the Cuban exile community itself, and the charges had little to no effect on the support Bosch garnered from Cubans in Miami, since exiles would continue to protest his imprisonment in the future. It also bears repeating that all anti-Castro organizations were competing for financial support from the CIA during this time, and money was clearly tight. Extortion, and threats of violence in general, were not at all outside of the realm of potential tactics for groups like the MIRR in the world of Cuban exile politics, which was becoming increasingly volatile as leaders and organizations argued over precise tactics for reclaiming the homeland.

Even if he did not attempt to extort other Miami Cubans, Bosch repeatedly proved that he was personally willing to resort to violence to accomplish his goals, in spite of the fact that the plots he manufactured were often implausible or ineffective. Miami metropolitan police arrested Bosch again in April of 1966, along with two fellow MIRR members, for the illegal possession and transportation of explosive materials. Bosch had been driving along the Tamiami Trail, 15 miles from Naples, Florida, with Jose Antonio Mulet and Barbaro Balan when police stopped the group by chance at a roadblock that had been set up to catch an escaped prisoner in the area. When police searched Bosch's Cadillac, they discovered six live, 100-pound, surplus aerial bombs stuffed with

[33] "Exile Chief Bosch Pleads Not Guilty in Extortion Case," *Miami Herald*, December 24, 1965, 36.

dynamite inside of the trunk.[34] When police interrogated the trio, Bosch claimed they were heading to a South Florida CIA base where they would load the explosives into a boat and "bomb Castro."[35] In October of that year, Bosch and his compatriots were found guilty on three of the charges leveled against them, but apparently, nothing came of this verdict either, as Bosch was free again by that fall.

Bosch finally received his legal comeuppance in 1968, when an attempt to blow up a Polish freighter transporting goods to Cuba resulted in his formal termination from the CIA and temporary imprisonment. Although tenuous and short-lived, Bosch's tenure as a Miami-based militant and CIA contact provided him, and many other exile extremists, with the contacts, training, and resources to carry out more violent operations in the future. Public responses to his imprisonment in the 1960s also demonstrated that he had the moral backing of much of the Cuban community in Miami. Most importantly, however, it was during this time that Bosch met fellow exile and CIA contact Louis Posada.[36]

Like many other far right-wing Cuban-Americans, Bosch and Posada both felt that the CIA's dedication to overthrowing Castro was fading, and that the time for exiles to take charge of their own liberation had come. Unlike Bosch, however, Posada was not interested in politics until the Revolution was nearly over. He began his career, so to speak, in 1959 as a CIA contact in Cuba, carrying out covert, anti-Castro plots funded by the Agency in the first years following the Revolution.[37] In 1961, he fled from Havana to Miami after a botched sabotage operation against the Castro government had landed him in prison and forced him to seek asylum at the Argentine Embassy. Posada joined Brigade 2506, the military group that would lead the fateful Bay of Pigs invasion and although he would not see action during the invasion and never gained the popular

[34]Tom Morgan, "Exiles Arrested with Live Bombs: Explosives Stuff in Car Trunk," *Miami Herald*, April 23, 1966, 3
[35] Morgan, "Exiles Arrested with Live Bombs," 3
[36] Dewar, "Passion for Free Cuba Drove Bosch to Extreme."
[37] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."

public profile of Bosch, Posada became a valuable asset to the CIA from 1963 until around 1973. [38] Between 1963 and 1964, while Bosch and the MIRR were carrying out air raids against Cuba and dodging the Miami police, Posada trained in the U.S. Army at Fort Benning in Georgia, where he became an expert in demolitions and marksmanship.[39] After, according to CIA records, he acted as an arms dealer and trainer to other exile groups, primarily in Miami, Central Florida, and Guatemala, in addition to being a source of information for the Agency regarding exile activities.[40] Between 1969 and 1974, he also worked as the Chief of Counterintelligence for the Venezuelan secret police force, DISIP.[41] In 1973, Posada was suspected of potential involvement in drug smuggling from Venezuela, and although the CIA cleared him of this suspicion, he was "amicably terminated" from the agency in mid-1974.[42] Over the next several years, he ran a private investigation agency in Caracas and retained ties with the CIA and other exile extremist groups, including "regular correspondence" with Bosch.[43]

A Gathering Storm: Increased Exile Violence in the Early 1970s

Between 1974 and 1976, while Secretary of State Henry Kissinger attempted to secure a détente between Cuba and the United States through private talks with officials in Havana, a series of violent murders, bombings, and assassination attempts wracked the Miami Cuban exile community. The targets were well-known, outspoken exile leaders, including, most imminently, Jose Elias de la Torriente, who was shot to death in his Coral Gables home on the evening of April 12 while watching television with his wife.[44] As a public figure, Torriente supported a unified diaspora and

[38] Ann Louise Bardach and Larry Rohter, "A Bomber's Tale: Decades of Intrigue; Life in the Shadows, Trying to Bring Down Castro," *New York Times*, July 13, 1998.
[39] Memorandum from Director, FBI, to Director, CIA, "Information Regarding Anti-Castro Figures Possibly Involved in Neutrality or Other Violations of Federal Law," November 26, 1976, 2.
[40] House Select Committee on Assassinations, LUIS POSADA CARRILES, ca. 1978.
[41] State Department, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Memorandum, "Castro's Allegations," October 18, 1976, 1976-10-18, 5.
[42] House Select Committee on Assassinations, LUIS POSADA CARRILES, ca. 1978
1978-00-00, 12.
[43] House Select Committee on Assassinations, LUIS POSADA CARRILES, ca. 1978
1978-00-00, 12.
[44] Miguel Perez, "Slaying Continues Series of Exile Violence," *Miami Herald*, April 14, 1976, 2.

proposed a large-scale invasion of Cuba to retake the island.[45] He had collected money from the community in the late 1960s and early 1970s for the cause, but his plans never materialized.[46] In a letter that appeared not long after the assassination, a militant exile group named "Zero" claimed credit for Torriente's murder, calling him a "traitor" and vowing to continue killing other it deemed traitorous to the Cuban cause.[47] That following February, Luciano Nieves, a champion of peaceful coexistence between the US and Cuba, was shot to death while leaving a children's hospital where he had been visiting his son, and in October of 1975, a dynamite bomb also claimed the life of former Cuban government official and anti-Castro figure Rolando Masferrer.[48] Several exiles were also wounded in assassination attempts, including Jose Antonio Mulet, the MIRR officer arrested alongside Bosch for transporting explosives two years earlier, and perhaps more famously, Emilio Milián, exile radio commentator, and anti-Castro activist who publicly opposed the use of violence.[49] Aside from the murders themselves, frequent bombings also plagued the community. In 1974 alone, Cuban exiles were responsible for 45 percent of the world's bombings, and authorities were able to link exile groups to 113 bombings in the U.S. in the 1970s.[50]

It is tempting to want to see clear connections between these instances of violence in Miami in the mid-1970s and attribute them wholly to terrorist attempts to control the politics of the exile community. Certainly, as I will expand upon later, much of the violence in this period was politically charged, but it does not explain why strongly anti-Castro individuals, like Rolando Masferrer or Jose Mulet, were targeted as well. Organized Crime Bureau Chief Lieutenant Thomas Lyons told the *Miami Herald* in April of 1976 that "saying every bombing is a terrorist bombing just ain't so."[51]

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[45] Perez, "Slaying Continues Series of Exile Violence," 2.
[46] Perez, "Slaying Continues Series of Exile Violence," 2.
[47] Edna Buchanan, "Death in Exile: Cuban Leaders Suffer," *Miami Herald*, April 19, 1976, 13.
[48] Perez, "Slaying Continues Series of Exile Violence," 2.
[49] Perez, "Slaying Continues Series of Exile Violence," 2.
[50] Alan McPherson, "Long View: How the Fight Against Castro Once Terrorized U.S. Cities," *Americas Quarterly* https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/years-terror-longview.
[51] Buchanan, "Death in Exile," 13.

Sergeant Robertson McGavrock with the Miami police added that it was "very difficult to accept and look at one terrorist organization as such and examine it because there are literally hundreds of splinter groups… And then we can't account for individuals going out on their own and doing something for recognition and acceptance into those groups—or to express dissatisfaction for inaction on the part of those groups."[52] McGavrock also added that "the public has a tendency to overlook the fact that it may be an act perpetrated by an individual with intents other than political, for example, a simple extortion plot against a narcotics trafficker."[53] Acknowledging that some of these murders were the result of internal disagreements over tactics or money helps us understand how tumultuous exile politics were, even among groups and people that theoretically were united in their hatred of Castro. At the same time, the fates of Nieves and Milián were almost certainly connected to their opposition to violence, in Milián's case, or conciliatory politics, in Nieves'. Torriente, for his part, was most likely murdered for his failure to deliver Cuban liberation after accepting large sums of money for the cause. The exact innerworkings of the exile terrorist underground are complex and almost as confusing to modern day historians as they were for Miami police decades ago. What is clear, however, is that neglecting to adhere publicly to a strict narrative of anti-Castroism, by any and all means necessary, effectively became grounds for murder in this period, especially as exile extremists became increasingly frustrated with the infectivity of their own methods and with the advent of U.S.-Cuban détente on an international level. By the mid-1970s, only hardline, violent anti-Castroism was publicly accepted, at least by those who were willing to do something about it if individuals dared to think otherwise.

The Torriente murder was never solved. Over the years, a series of individuals and groups came forward, claiming to be Zero, but despite enormous investigative efforts, Miami police were unable to amass enough evidence to make an arrest. They did have their suspicions, and near the top

[52] Buchanan, "Death in Exile," 13.
[53] Buchanan, "Death in Exile," 13.

of the list, as one might expect, was Dr. Orlando Bosch. In 1972, Bosch was released from prison on parole, having served only four years of his ten-year sentence. He fled the U.S. almost immediately after the Torriente assassination occurred, leaving historians and journalists to speculate about his possible connection to the assassination.[54] Regardless, by the time a subpoena showed up on his doorstep, the exile was long gone.[55]

After fleeing the U.S. in the wake of the Torriente assassination, Bosch illegally traveled throughout South America and the Caribbean for the next two years. He has been deemed responsible for the bombings of the Panamanian Embassy in Caracas, the Venezuelan-Cuban friendship club, the Mexican Embassy in Buenos Aires, as well as scattered attempts on the lives of Cuban diplomats in Chile and Argentina.[56] Between 1974 and 1975, Bosch was arrested twice: first by DISIP, with whom he struck a deal that allowed him to walk free if he refrained from carrying out his attacks in Venezuela; a second time when he tried to enter Costa Rica with a false Chilean passport in February of 1976. The event was highly publicized in both Spanish and English-language newspapers. Some reports claimed that Bosch confessed to a plan to assassinate Henry Kissinger when the Secretary of State visited the country, others suggested that he was after Andres Pascal Allende, the former Chilean president's nephew—all allegations that Bosch later denied.[57] Exile columnist Luis Conte Agüero remarked that Bosch's arrest was a "shameful page" for Costa Rica, which was otherwise a "clean central American democracy."[58] In Agüero's opinion, over the past few years, Bosch had "increased his stature measurably through his work and suffering (*padece*) for the liberation of Cuba" and that the alleged plot against Kissinger was "nothing more than a venomous red plot and the delirious fears of those who see ghosts everywhere."[59] Despite his explicit

[54] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 48.
[55] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[56] Fleetwood "I Am Going to Declare War,"48.
[57] Fleetwood "I Am Going to Declare War," 48 and Dewar "Passion for Free Cuba Drove Bosch to Extreme."
[58] Luis Conte Agüero, "Desfile," *Alerta*, March 19, 1976, 8.
[59] Luis Conte Agüero "Desfile" 8.

connections to a number of bombings and murders during the past several years, the exile press continued to hold unquestioned support for Bosch. Costa Rican police were ultimately unable to prove anything beyond the illegality of his documentation and deported the exile to the Dominican Republic.

Bosch had maintained contact with Posada throughout this period, and the two finally reunited in 1976 in the city of Santo Domingo.[60] There, in June of that year, Bosch and Posada organized a meeting with leaders from six different exile extremist organizations: Alpha 66, *Agrupación Abdala*, veterans of the 2506 Brigade, the *Frente Liberación Nacional Cubana* (FLNC), F 14, and *Accion Cubana*.[61] Together, the groups combined to create the Coordinación de Organizaciones Revolucionarias Unidas, or CORU—perhaps the most dangerous exile organization yet. Bosch was to be its sole public leader and spokesperson, with the rest of the organization remaining anonymous.[62] According to Bosch, the goal of the organization was to topple Castro, "or at least make his life impossible" through even more extreme, violent actions than the various groups had taken up in the past.[63] CORU made several concrete, initial resolutions to achieve this, among them the incendiary decision "to begin attacking Castro's planes in the air."[64] In the following years, they would murder dozens of civilians to realize this goal.

"Blood and Fire!": Exile Terrorism and the Cuban Diaspora in the Late 1970s

On the morning of October 6, 1976, two men boarded a Cubana Airlines flight leaving from Trinidad. They were joined by 48 other passengers, including all 24 members of the Cuban National Fencing Team, who had just become international champions after winning the Central American and Caribbean Championships, as well as a number of Cuban Government officials and Guyanese

[60] Dewar, "Passion for Free Cuba Drove Bosch to Extreme."
[61] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 51.
[62] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 51.
[63] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 51.
[64] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 52.

and North Korean civilians.[65] The flight made its regular stop at Barbados' Seawell Airport in Bridgetown, and the two men, who Venezuelan courts and the world would soon identify as twenty-two-year-old Hernan Ricardo and twenty-five-year-old Freddy Lugo, disembarked the plane, having left a small, plastic bomb inside.[66] Not ten minutes after it had taken off again, an explosion wracked the aircraft. Witnesses on Barbados' nearby beaches watched as the same plane, now engulfed in flames, spiraled into the water from 18,000 feet.[67] Later that night, Ricardo and Lugo made their way to Trinidad, where a tip from a taxi driver who noticed Ricardo's erratic behavior led to their arrest by Trinidadian police.[68] Their subsequent confessions and possession of an address book containing the telephone numbers of other terrorists implicated both Posada and Bosch in the attack.[69] On October 8th, the two were arrested and, along with four co-conspirators, would spend the next four years in a Caracas prison, awaiting civilian and military trials for the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455.[70]

One way that exiles maintained and disseminated a discourse of support for this type of terrorism, regardless of whether or not most of them agreed with violent tactics, was through the prolific exile press. Almost immediately after the attack, CORU, with Bosch as its very public leader, took credit for blowing up the plane.[71] Yet, the exile journalists were initially reluctant to link the attacks to Bosch, or even label the explosion an act of terrorism. In the staunchly anti-communist newspaper *Alerta*'s first article that mentions Flight 455, reporters mentioned that their newsroom had received a telephone call from a woman who identified herself as the voice of CORU and warned them that future attacks were imminent. They also acknowledged that a group named "El Condor"—

[65] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 52.
[66] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 52.
[67] "78 Are Believed Killed as Cuban Jetliner Crashes in Sea After Blast" *New York Times*, October 7, 1976.
[68] Fleetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 52.
[69] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[70] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[71] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."

which was another name CORU adopted, although *Alerta* journalists may not have been aware of this—claimed responsibility for the attack.[72] Their assessment of the events is quite tentative:

> Until now the only fact that is known about the airline disaster is the certainty that there had been an explosion on board, although there are no concrete charges against the two Venezuelan citizens that have been found and detained as suspects of having intervened in the act. Regarding the warning made by the anticommunist combatant organizations, the North American authorities have not found clues about the same militants, although if they had been able to filter that out, there is great concern in Washington because there all of the groups are considered united and capable of an organization and efficiency that, until now, has not been demonstrated by the Cuban exile groups that had been running scattered combative activity against Cuban tyranny.[73]

Considering the same newspaper readily accused American leftist organizations like the Students for a Democratic Society and Black Power of being Castro co-conspirators with little to no proof, often blaming them for terrorist acts that had yet to even occur, it is striking that *Alerta* chose this moment to approach an incendiary event with such hesitancy.[74] The article sticks to the facts and might even be suggesting that, despite the call they received earlier that day, exile groups could not yet be implicated, as U.S. authorities had yet to find any link between them and the bombing. Although they had been arrested several weeks before, there is no mention of Bosch or other exile leaders in this initial report.

One could argue that exile journalists were merely ignorant, willfully or otherwise, of the facts. There is no way to know, without a doubt, how much information exile journalists might have had regarding terrorist exploits. However, articles from English-language newspapers that readily reported on such activity indicates that a significant number of details about exile terrorism, including the number and nature of the attacks authored by exile organizations, were in fact, public knowledge. For example, Bosch had revealed in a 1974 *Miami News* article that he had, at one time or another, been the head of the organizations Acción Cubana, Cuban Power, and it was well-known

[72] "Seguiran Atacando Objectivos de la Tirania," *Alerta*, October 22, 1976, 1.
[73] "Seguiran Atacando Objectivos de la Tirania," 1.
[74] "Verano Sangriento en Estados Unidos: Plan Combinado de las Panteras Negras, Guerrillas RAM Groupos SDS, y el 'Black Power' Sensacionales Detalles," *Alerta,* March 26, 1970.

that he was in charge of the MIRR in the 1960s.[75] At the very least, this would have connected Bosch to the bombing of the Cuban Embassy in Lima.[76] *New Times* journalist Blake Fleetwood's well-known 1977 profile on Bosch, furthermore, referred to an unidentified exile newspaper that reported on CORU's formation in the summer of 1976, including the fact that one of the organization's resolutions was "to begin attacking Castro's planes in the air."[77] In the Fleetwood article, Bosch also admitted that CORU had been responsible for over 50 bombings throughout the U.S., Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Argentina in the 11 months since the organization's inception. This still would not have barred them from the knowledge that Bosch and CORU were very likely responsible for a number of terrorist attacks. In a balanced, if still supportive, profile on Bosch just three weeks after the attack, *El Expreso de Miami* readily acknowledges CORU's links to the recent attacks throughout North and South America, including Flight 455.[78] Its author, Jose Luis Hernandez, even labels them "actions of a terrorist type" (*acciones de tipo terrorista*), which, at this time, was rather rare for a relatively conservative exile newspaper like *El Expreso*.

The exile press and anyone who paid attention to politics within the community would have almost certainly understood Bosch's connections to terrorism, CORU, and possibly the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455. In spite of this, the press made a deliberate decision to defend Bosch and other affiliated terrorists. This was almost certainly a concerted effort to maintain unity among the larger exile community, and perhaps, to project a more respectable image of the Cuban diaspora to the American and Latin American public. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the attack, a newspaper like *Alerta* would not have wanted to risk condemning Bosch, Posada, and the rest of CORU in print before their trial had begun. This explanation tracks with the remainder of *Alerta*'s reporting on the trial, which highlighted the various declarations of the suspects' innocence over the

[75] Hilda Inclan, "Bosch Declares War on Castro," *The Miami News*, June, 1974, 3.
[76] Inclan, "Bosch Declares War on Castro," 3.
[77] Feetwood, "I Am Going to Declare War," 51.
[78] Jose Luis Hernandez, "Orlando Bosch: El Arafat del Caribe," *El Expreso de Miami*, October 29, 1976, 3.

next several years. Although they were initially acquitted in 1976 on the basis of insufficient evidence, Bosch and Posada remained on trial for the next four years and in prison for another 11 (9 in Posada's case) as their case went through the complex Venezuelan civilian and military courts.[79] *Alerta* was effectively attempting to establish and preserve a narrative of innocence and sympathy for Bosch, using the drawn-out trial to maintain his image as a patriot and martyr within the exile community.

Perhaps even more revealing of exile discourse were the editorials that *Alerta*'s director, Benjamin de la Vega, wrote throughout the late 1970s in which he explicitly expressed his support for exile militancy. On the May 20 1977, reflecting on the 75th anniversary of the end of the U.S.'s military occupation of Cuba following the Spanish-American War, de la Vega assessed that while Cuba's "glorious tradition" of sacrifice continued in exile, full liberation would not be possible without a change in tactics. He voiced his distrust of the U.S.'s interests—"we do not believe that today, the US acts differently than it has in the past"—and went on to say that "the only formula [for full liberation] is the fanaticism of militancy and combat."[80] De la Vega even went as far as to posit that:

> The exile community has to organize a plan of fighting, forgetting their personal struggles and ambitions. All of the supposed leaders of the exile community are in precarious situations if they are not going to be accompanied by blood, gunpowder, and sacrifice.[81]

This type of rhetoric demonstrates a clear effort to establish a discourse that united the exile community in a single, militant front whose only goal was to topple Castro. In the divisive atmosphere of the late 1970s, there was no longer room for political deviation, personal differences, or external meddling from U.S. agencies that slowed the counterrevolutionary process. De la Vega's

[79] García, *Havana USA*, 144.
[80] Benjamin de la Vega, "Editorial," *Alerta*, May 27, 1977, 2.
[81] De la Vega, "Editorial," 2.

blatant support for Bosch serves to further emphasize this new urgency to join exiles together. In a 1977 editorial, de la Vega declared that:

> Orlando Bosch is a symbol of the combativity of the Cuban diaspora that, in 18 years of struggle, has demonstrated that it has an abundance of fighters ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of liberty in their homeland. He deserves the upmost respect and consideration from all governments of South America… May our brotherly embrace be brought to Orlando Bosch through the bars of his Venezuelan prison cell, and along with a hug, [we send] a demand to the Government and the President of Venezuela to permit a freedom fighter to leave their country as a citizen of the world who deserves the respect of all free men in the Universe. May he have it wherever he is.[82]

Bosch was the type of exile leader de la Vega believed to be fit to lead a renewed effort to liberate the Cuban homeland—he even considered Bosch a "symbol" for the entire protracted struggle that Cubans had been embroiled in since the Revolution. This not only implies that Bosch's leadership and methods were appropriate, but that the retaking of Cuba had been and would always be an inherently violent endeavor. The necessity of exile unity was certainly not new, but the urgency with which it was espoused and exile leaders' palpable frustration from their lack of progress in inciting counterrevolution had grown significantly since the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs and the early 1960s. This is detectible especially in de la Vega's editorials. Without a doubt, this radicalization, both in tactics and discourse, was due to and magnified by the dialogue between the U.S. and Cuba, the movement of sections of the exile population to the political left, and the apparent failure of even the most violent efforts to overthrow Castro.

Exactly a year after the attack on Flight 455, de la Vega conducted an exclusive interview with Bosch from his prison cell in Caracas for *Alerta*.[83] The portrait de la Vega painted of Bosch was flattering, as always and Bosch expounded on the injustice that had befallen him in the Venezuelan courts.[84] The photographs taken for the article show Bosch in civilian clothes, his young Chilean wife

[82] Benjamin de la Vega, "Editorial" *Alerta*, July 15, 1977, 2.
[83] Bejamin de la Vega, "Entrevista tras las Rejas: Guerra en dos Etapas: Anuncia Bosch," *Alerta,* August 12, 1977, 1.
[84] De la Vega, "Entrevista," 1.

on his arm, and a Cuban flag pinned to his cell wall.[85] Posada, who was his cellmate, as well as their co-conspirators Hernán Ricardo and Freddy Lugo, are also in several of the pictures.[86] Rather than focus on the crime that placed them in prison, de la Vega commented on Bosch's improving health, and the countless sacrifices he had made in choosing to dedicate his life to Cuban liberation.[87] Like *Alerta*'s editorials and articles, the interview was another attempt to exonerate Bosch, Posada, and CORU in the eyes of the Cuban diaspora and establish their tactics as the most logical and necessary path for Cuban freedom.

De la Vega was certainly not alone in his belief that Bosch's violent methods were the only viable path to Cuban liberation. In its first issue following the attack, *El Expreso de Miami* dedicated its editorial to Bosch, lamenting the U.S. and Cuban preoccupation with events like Flight 455 and the gruesome assassination of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier—the perpetrators of which, they asserted, could not yet be determined.[88] Interestingly enough, they lamented the fact that no one investigating the murder of Cuban exile leader Rolando Masferrer, which had occurred nearly a year ago and still had yet to be resolved.[89] The editorial also pointed out what they perceived as contradictory behavior on the part of the U.S.; Americans, they stated, had all but abandoned the Monroe Doctrine, and now refused to interfere in Caribbean affairs to prevent the spread of totalitarian ideas and communism.[90] The reality of international relations was, of course, far more complex, but the way the exile press perceived U.S. foreign and domestic policy here falls in line with the previous accusations of American hypocrisy and betrayal of the exile community, which they partially blamed for the emergence of violence in the late 1970s. "Because of this," the editorial concluded, "we believe that Orlando Bosch is the path that those who love Cuba will have to take."[91]

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[85] De la Vega, "Entrevista," 1.
[86] De la Vega, "Entrevista," 3.
[87] De la Vega, "Entrevista," 3.
[88] "Editorial," *El Expreso de Miami* October 22 1976, 2.
[89] "Editorial" *El Expreso de Miami*, 2.
[90] "Editorial" *El Expreso de Miami*, 2.
[91] "Editorial," *El Expreso de Miami*, 2.

Other papers supported terrorism merely by providing a platform for exile terrorists to share their rhetoric without critique. In November of 1978, *La Crónica*, a Cuban exile magazine produced in Puerto Rico, published an interview with a leader from the exile terrorist organization, Omega 7. The interviewee was identified only as "Zeta," and photographs accompanying the article show him in full tactical gear, faced covered by a black mask that leaves only his eyes visible.[92] The interview itself is even more unsettling. Zeta's rhetoric echoes that of de la Vega's editorials, as he condemns exiles who have "dedicated their time and strength to enriching themselves and living a vacuous life, without remembering with militancy the pain that our country suffers…"[93] When asked if he opposed dialogue with Cuba, the Omega 7 member answered, "Absolutely. Blood and fire! I believe that we have already given an example in Puerto Rico attacking one of the local *dialogueros*." It is difficult to tell from this response, but Zeta was probably referring to one of the various attacks on members of the Cuban-American pro-dialogue organization, the Antonio Maceo Brigade, which had sent a delegation to Puerto Rico in the late 1970s. Zeta also dismissed the recent proposals for family reunification as a "bluff" from Castro to "divide all of the exile community," and threatened that anyone suspected of supporting such plans would be identified by Omega 7 as a potential target.[94] The *La Crónica* interviewer, Gloria Gill, apparently took no issue with what Zeta had to say, describing him as an "educated and cultured man," to whom she wished the best of luck in the defense of the Cuban cause.[95] This was, in fact, quite standard for the magazine; *La Crónica* frequently provided a voice to exile terrorist organizations; they published letters from Alpha 66, Acción Cubana, and Agrupación Abdala delegations in Puerto Rico, as well as advertisements from the Movimiento Nacionalista Cubano, which collected money for the legal defense of Guillermo and Ignacio Novo, the two Cuban exiles implicated in the assassination of Orlando Letelier.[96] These

[92] Gloria Gill "Entrevista Exclusiva con 'Zeta' Jefe Miliar de Comandos Omega 7" *La Crónica* 14 November 1978, 6.
[93] Gill, "Entrevista Exclusiva," 6.
[94] Gill, "Entrevista Exclusiva," 7.
[95] Gill, "Entrevista Exclusiva," 7.
[96] "¡Presente! Cuba Sobre Todo," *La Crónica*, September 18, 1978, 21.

additional examples of overt support for violent methods demonstrates that the construction of a discourse which validated and promoted exile terrorism as a method for Cuban liberation was a concerted effort by multiple exile leaders and newspapers.

Throughout their tenure as prisoners, Bosch and Posada became celebrities within the exile community. Cuban-Americans held rallies and protests in support of Bosch's freedom and in 1983, exile leaders fought for March 25 to be declared "Orlando Bosch Day."[97] Maurice Ferré, the Miami Mayor at the time, reportedly visited Bosch in his Caracas prison, while other Miami politicians went directly to Washington, asking Congress to pressure the Venezuelan Government into releasing the prisoners.[98] Witnesses and judges involved in the case, on the other hand, received death threats.[99] As one Venezuelan judge saw it, "it would be inconceivable to allow them to go free, but we are being strongly pressured … Whatever the government wants is what will get done."[100] This outpouring of support could be interpreted as an example of Cuban exiles protecting their own, but it was also certainly a result of the way *Alerta* and other newspapers chose to laud Bosch, his co-conspirators, and exile terrorists at large as patriots and martyrs. Hegemonic discourse had the ability not only to shape the Cuban exile narrative, but also mobilize the community in a powerful way.

The reporting on Cubana Airlines Flight 455, while possibly the clearest example of exile support for terrorists like Bosch, was not the only instance of violent exile crime that the garnered attention from the press. I briefly mentioned the April 1976 attempted assassination of WQBA radio commentator and exile hero Emilio Milián earlier, but his story deserves additional analysis. Unlike Flight 455, the attack against Milián made it into the exile press immediately and explicitly. *Alerta* published its first article on Milián in early May of 1976, a front-page piece celebrating his survival and declaring that although the Milián had lost both legs in the explosion from a bomb placed in his

[97] Garcia, *Havana USA*, 144 and Ann Louise Bardach *Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami* (New York, NY: Random House, 2002), chap. 4, Kindle.
[98] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[99] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[100] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."

car, he would soon be walking with the help of special prosthetics.[101] Like Bosch, the press proclaimed that Milián was a hero. Instead of focusing on the investigation into the attack or lamenting the lack of arrests made, they highlighted his role as an exile leader. On October 9, 1976, there was a ceremony held in the auditorium at Bayfront Park in Miami in Milián's honor, celebrating his new position as news director and vice president of the station at WQBA.[102] Later that same month, according to *Alerta,* "diverse factions" within the Cuban diaspora proposed the creation of a single exile organization with Milián as its leader.[103] "Various Cuban exile figures conceived the idea to use his enormous popularity and his patriotic sentiment to become the flag of a powerful anti-Castro movement," the article claimed.[104] Milián had the power and popular support to unite the Cuban exile community, or at least it seemed that way. As a later article revealed, the radio commentator turned down the offer of a position as an exile leader.[105]

Unlike with Bosch, the press did not have to perform moral gymnastics to justify why Milián would have made a fitting exile leader. However, *Alerta* left out the crucial detail of why exactly Milián had been targeted in the first place. As a radio commentator, Milián was well-known for his hardline against Castro and communism on his show *Habla el Pueblo*, but he just as readily denounced exile violence and terrorism, especially in Miami.[106] An unnamed terrorist organization reportedly told Milián to cease his criticism of exile terrorism, a warning that Milián did not heed.[107] The attack occurred not long after.[108] Even if exile journalists were not aware of this aspect of the investigation, there is little chance that members of a community as tightly-knit as Cuban-Americans

[101] "Milian Podra Caminar," *Alerta*, May 7, 1976, 1.
[102] "Honor a Milián," *Alerta*, October, 15, 1976, 1.
[103] "Dirigira Milian Plan Unitario Contra Castro," Alerta, October 22, 1976, 1.
[104] "Dirigira Milian Plan Unitario Contra Castro," 1.
[105] "Bisturí," Alerta, December 3, 1976, 2.
[106] The Associated Press, "Emilio Milián -- Commentator, 69," *New York Times*, March 17, 2001.
[107] Jim McGee, "U.S. Drops Car-Bomb Indictment," *Miami Herald*, September 14, 1983.
[108] No one was ever arrested for the attack against Milián. In 1981, exiles Gaspar Jiménez and Gustavo Castillo were indicted by a Grand Jury for the attack, but the indictment was later dismissed in 1983 by U.S. Attorney Stanley Marcus. Jiménez was an associate of Louis Posada. See Helga Silvia "Jailed Exile Freed to Return to Miami" *The Miami Herald* May 10, 1983 and Jim McGee "U.S. Drops Car-Bomb Indictment," September 14, 1983.

in Miami would not have been aware of Milián's opposition to violence. It is incredibly likely that the omission of this aspect of Milián's politics was purposeful in order to establish him as an exile leader whose popularity would easily unite Cuban exiles without sacrificing the support they consistently gave to terrorists who employed violent tactics. Furthermore, it might not have been a coincidence that calls for Milián to assume a leadership position within the community occurred almost simultaneously with Bosch and Posada's arrests and CORU's implications in terrorist activities. The exile press, as always, was searching for a moral and tactical leader, or at least a popular figure who could be molded into one through discourse.

The dominant, hegemonic discourse established by the press supported terrorists, but it is difficult to believe that exiles stood for violent tactics as uniformly as the press made it seem they did. Due to the overwhelming nature of the pro-violence, pro-unity discourse in the exile press, accessing public opinion on terrorism in the exile community, especially that of those who opposed it, is not easy. However, we can search for traces of these attitudes within the text of pro-terrorist discourse. In his profile of Orlando Bosch in *El Expreso de Miami,* for example, Jose Luis Hernandez mentions that "many people, including Cubans, do not seem to agree with CORU's terrorist tactics."[109] In 1976, a former member of the Cuban Revolutionary Council specifically criticized exile terrorism and being counterintuitive, asserting that they "cost human lives, create immense anxiety in the community, and, more importantly, discredit the exile community before U.S. public opinion..."[110] Emilio Milián's popularity and continued support after his attack may have been partially due to, rather than in spite of, his opposition to violence and terrorism, regardless of how *Alerta* reporters attempted to construct him as an exile leader. Benjamin de la Vega's editorials and Zeta's interview with *La Crónica* both lamented those exiles who refused to conform to conservative exile politics and participate in armed struggle against Castro. Zeta, specifically, mentioned that

[109] Hernandez, "Orlando Bosch: El Arafat del Caribe," 3.
[110] As quoted in García, *Havana USA*, 141.

Omega 7 would target *dialogueros*—those individuals who supported open communication with Havana. The singling out of exiles who did not champion militancy and may have even encouraged rapprochement with the island indicates that they were enough of a problem to pursue in the first place. In a 2019 interview on the topic of exile terrorism, one exile expressed his own personal, moral objections to the terrorism and its supporters to me: "to [terrorists' supports in the community] there's no gray area—how could you justify killing innocent people?"[111] Certainly, individuals opposed to the violence did exist, and in numbers significant enough for them to be of concern to the extremist right. However, their voices do not appear explicitly in almost any exile newspaper or forum outside of a select few leftist publications, and this silence cannot be solely attributed to the hegemonizing effect of press discourse.

There are reasons beyond the predominantly conservative political tendencies of the Cuban diaspora that explain the overall lack of public criticism for exile terrorism—after all, it is not so much of interest that these attitudes existed, but that they were so rarely expressed. As the fates of Emilio Milián and others who supported non-violence demonstrate, the threats exile terrorist organizations made against civilians were quite real. According to one interviewee, members of the Cuban diaspora were "fed up," with the hate from terrorists; however, he acknowledged that such attitudes were unlikely to be reflected in the press or other public forums.[112] "That's your market as a newspaper," he explained to me, referring to the Cuban exile community, "to be pro-Letelier or pro-Allende [the leftist leader of Chile between 1970-73] would be to get a bomb at the *Diario las Americas* [a popular Spanish-language newspaper]."[113] Milián, for his part, merely spoke out against terrorism—he was still anti-communist and anti-Castro. Those who refused both of those positions, as many in leftist circles did, were at an even greater risk of terrorist attack. Maria de los Angeles

[111] Jose Contreras, Interview with author, July 13, 2019.
[112] Julio Gonzalez, Interview with author, July 11, 2019.
[113] Gonzales, Interview with author, July 11, 2019.

Torres, a Cuban exile, sociologist, and member of the Antonio Maceo Brigade recalled: "We were afraid that the events we sponsored would be bombed. Our names appeared in press communiques under the headline 'Castro's Agents,' or we were called *dialogueros,* a term that came to have negative connotations"[114] The editorial board of the popular exile leftist political and literary magazine, *Areíto,* was attacked so frequently that they were forced to include a note at the beginning of a 1976 publication asking for donations to help supplement the costs of damages brought by the attacks:

> To our readers, in the past year, numerous attacks against *Areíto* were made, ranging from terrorism to lobbying against the stands that sold our magazine. These attacks did not prevent the publication of Areito, but they forced us to incur additional costs precisely to ensure that our magazine continued to come out.[115]

Earlier that year, the home of *Areíto* affiliates, Vincente and Lourdes Dopico, was the target of a bombing by exile terrorist organization Hijos de Girón.[116] No one was hurt in this particular instance, but other leftist exiles were far less fortunate. In April of 1979, Carlos Muñiz Varela, a Cuban exile and one of the owners of a travel agency that offered flights from Puerto Rico to Cuba, was murdered by Omega 7 while driving home one evening in San Juan.[117] CORU had attacked the same travel agency in the months before and after his death, and Muñiz himself was clearly targeted for being a *dialoguero.*[118] By the end of 1979, Omega 7 was responsible for at least 20 separate bombings of *dialoguero* homes and businesses.[119] Those who disapproved of the use of violence, aligned with the political left, or merely were suspected of supporting a positive relationship with Cuba were effectively placing a target on their own backs. Despite their significant numbers, it was fear that kept many dissenting exiles quiet and, it could be argued, may have even allowed the extremist exile

[114] María De los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 100.
[115] "A Nuestros Lectores," *Areíto,* 3:2-3, 1976, 1.
[116] "Panico Entra Agentes del Tirano," *Alerta*, April 30, 1976, 1.
[117] José Quiroga, "The Cuban Exile Wars: 1976-1981," *American Quarterly* 66:3 (2014): 819.
[118] Quiroga, "The Cuban Exile Wars," 829.
[119] Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors,* 100.

leaders and press to establish the pro-unity, pro-militancy discourse that they did without interference from the opposing viewpoints of the left.

Conclusions

Orlando Bosch was released from a Venezuelan prison in 1987. He was acquitted three times of any connection to the October 1976 bombing of Flight 455 during the first four years of his sentence, but still served an extra seven years, held captive by the convoluted Venezuelan courts which required numerous civilian and military trials.[120] Soon after his release, Bosch returned to Miami, where he was arrested for having violated his parole almost two decades earlier; however, as we know, he was soon granted freedom and U.S. residency by the Bush family after significant political lobbying in Miami.[121] Posada had left prison two years earlier in 1985, his contacts in Miami, among them the famed exile Jorge Mas Canosa, having bribed the prison warden $28,000 for his release.[122] While Bosch lived out the remainder of his days in relative peace somewhere outside of Miami, Posada continued his terrorist activities into the late 1990s. Not even an assassination attempt in 1990, which left his face disfigured, was enough to curb the exile's tenacity.[123] Posada's final arrest before his death in May of 2018 was in 2005, when he was 77 years old, for residing in the country illegally.[124] Like Bosch, he was never deported on the grounds that he would likely be tortured in the country of extradition.[125] Both of them remained firm in their violent convictions throughout the end of their lives, never displaying much remorse. In a 2006 interview, when asked to reflect upon the 73 lives lost in the bombing of Cubana Flight 455, Bosch remarked, "I am a fighter and a patriot. We were at war with Castro, and in war, everything is valid."[126]

[120] Ann Louise Bardach, "Our Man's in Miami: Patriot or Terrorist?" *Washington Post,* April 17, 2005.
[121] Bardach, "Our Man's in Miami."
[122] Bardach, "Twilight of the Assassins."
[123] Marc Lacey, "Castro Foe Puts U.S. in an Awkward Spot," *New York Times*, October 8, 2006.
[124] "No Deportation for Cuban Militant," *BBC News,* September 28, 2005.
[125] "No Deportation for Cuban Militant."
[126] Bardach "Twilight of the Assassins."

The exile press sought to transform individuals like Bosch and Posada, as well as the historical events they were connected to, into symbols of exile unity, patriotism, and martyrdom, even if that meant disregarding or justifying political violence that resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Although we can imagine that this discourse was created with the objective of manufacturing a specific Cuban exile narrative, it had real, human consequences. The extremist exile right was a hegemonic apparatus, not only because right-wing journalists effectively controlled the discourse that justified and rationalized terrorism to the exile community, but because that control was also maintained through threats, violence, and assassinations carried out by terrorist organizations. Those on the left who dissented in any way from the most vehement anti-Castroism became the innocent targets of terrorism. Calls for unity did not result in a more politically harmonious diaspora, except through the elimination of exiles who fell outside the realm of accepted political thought. The apparent lack of legal penalty for Bosch, Posada, and other mass murderers cannot be explained by discourse alone, but as this project has made clear, rhetoric begets systems of thought which beget actions. Exile terrorists prevented public critique and accountability for their exploits through fear, but also relied on the rest of the exile community to produce and internalize discourse that supported them. Exile leaders and journalists, desperately wanting to see the reclamation their homeland from a leader they viewed as a tyrant, reimagined terrorism as a viable method of liberation using the classic language of Cuban unity and patriotism, which may have been all exiles felt remained of the country that was no longer their own.

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