***Chapter 16***

**On an icy morning in mid-January Rafael Montoya, executive director of the HIPR for all mainlaind operations, waited on the steps of his office for the 4th day of visits from the FBI. The HIPR had branches in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Montreal, Spain, other South American countries, and London. Most of them numbered no more than a few individuals. Headquarters of the HIPR on the continental United States were in a run-down building, inside a converted storefront on New York’s Lower East Side, between 7th Avenue and Avenue B.**

**Montoya was answerable to the principal officers in San Juan but otherwise had a free hand. The G-men, he reflected while waiting, had lost no time making pests of themselves. The two agents accompanying George Baker were never the same at each interview, which Baker always prefaced by the disclaimer of being nothing more than a “routine questioning”. Nobody was fooled: the ragged cloak of amiability concealed a grim and implacable hostility.**

**Shortly after each interview had begun with a polite exchange of banalities, George Baker always returned to the conjecture that, somewhere along the way, Senor Montoya must have run into some of these *‘Jybayrouz’* .**

**(Oh, by the way, what does “gi*bay*rou” mean? Something like a terrorist? No. Soldier ? No. Peasant? Closer. Something in between all these? .. very interesting…(Baker opens his steno pad and writes something down ) … I’ll send off a memo to Washington.. No, we’re not suspicious of any of your activities, Mr. Montoya.. all perfectly above board…)**

**Every afternoon the agents would leave, apparently satisfied. On the morning of the day after every visit Montoya waited for the inevitable phone-call from Baker’s secretary. He’d made some statement the day before that could open up a useful line of research. Would it be all right for Agent Baker to come around again, say in a day or two?**

**After keeping him waiting for two hours, Agent George Baker’s car could be seen pulling up at the corner. He’s brought two new appendages along with him. Rafael Montoya ushered them into the HIPR office. This time there was a significant difference, Montoya had taken the precaution of inviting an ACLU lawyer, Malcolm Sayres, to attend. Montoya sat behind his desk, with Sayres in a chair adjacent to the desk slightly to his left. While saying little for most of the interview, he paid close attention.**

**As he lowered his oblate bulk into a the frayed upholstery of a broken chair, Baker indicated to Rafael that this would probably be the last visit (at least with respect to this emergency ) from the ever-unwelcome Feds.**

**“Don’t take such a negative attitude towards us, Rafael. It’s not you that’s on trial.”**

**Baker panting, exaggerating his shortness of breath, was noticeably ostentatious, a patently inept way of intimating that he was harmless without fooling anyone. With a pudgy right hand he sketched a curious gesture of self-denigration. The same hand was laid flat on the desk as he arranged himself somewhat clumsily in the chair. Then he leaned forward, like a lazy tiger who might suddenly decide to leap.**

**Evidently George Baker was a man used to making himself at home in all kinds of surroundings. A second, vacant desk stood in a corner of the room near the door. One of Baker’s associates had seated himself behind it, crumpled into his chair as if he were dreaming of sex, with his legs open. and awaited orders. The other agent remained standing; he leaned against the wall, next to a life-sized poster, silk-screened in flaming reds and blacks, of Lolita Lebron. In one hand he held the body of a portable tape recorder with its microphone extended in the other. He looked foolish and probably was. The same could not be said for Baker himself.**

**A description of the New York offices of the HIPR, stripped to its essentials and refurbished, would fit a hundred other make-shift offices of small special-cause political organizations in Greenwich Village. Shoe-string economics conspired with a relentless pace of febrile activity. As with all such organizations the offices of the HIPR were the arena for merciless, ever renewed power struggles. It was also vigorously at odds with any other organization dedicated to related, but not quite identical, goals.**

**As much could be revealed to any interested observer from the literature piled up on the wooden table pushed against the wall. The man behind the spare desk walked over to the table to collect several mimeographed sheets. These were new; samples of literature were collected on each foray. After bestowing upon them something between a squint and a stare, he dropped them into a black samsonite attaché case.**

**He also picked up two copies of a book, its Spanish and English versions. He even paid for them! Rafael Montoya was its author: an impressively scholarly, if decidedly hostile, study of the systematic exploitation of Puerto Rico’s land, mineral wealth and its inhabitants from the time of Columbus down to the very recent discovery of a rich vein of uranium ore in the Central Mountains in**

**1979.**

**Despite its similarity to the offices of other Puerto Rican nationalist organizations, there was an artifact in it which distinguished the HIPR: the absence of the “Lone Star” flag. For the HIPR this flag carried too many associations with the American Stars and Stripes and some confusion with the flag of Texas.**

**The HIPR had designed its own flag, a rather attractive one at that, a welcome improvement over the mono-, bi- or tri-chromatic banners employed the world over.**

**Against a background of pastel sky and deep blue ocean were suspended a medley of artifacts of the native Borinquen Indians: pottery, jewelry, drums, bird feathers and drums. The flag drooped like a busomy theater curtain over the length of the edge of the literature table.**

**In contrast Montoya’s desk top was barren. In addition to the basic essentials of telephone, typewriter and files, it held the pages of an article he’d written and was proof-reading for publication in the next HIPR newsletter. Baker cautiously fingered a page of the article, before lifting it into the air like a dirty diaper.**

**“Mind if I read this, Mr. Montoya? Huh?”**

**“ Go ahead. I don’t know what you expect to find”, Rafael laughed, “What makes you think we have secrets to hide?”**

**Baker’s laugh was more ingratiating, almost apologetic. It was not however friendly. He slumped back into the chair, a finger to his lips. He assumed a look of perplexity, as if he thought he might actually be stupid.**

**“ I see … you’re writing something about the – uh- ‘incident’ in Philadelphia. You even … say , I notice …something about Pablo Casals!” He gazed at it for awhile, then handed it back :”Seems harmless enough.”**

**“We have no interest in Pablo Casals, Mr. Baker. It makes very difference for us that he ever came to live in Puerto Rico.”**

**“Hmmmm …well; you certainly couldn’t be interested in those *Jibayroes* folks then, could you? But tell me, Rafael..off the record..Just what do those lunatics have against Mr. Casals? Just a nice old man that played the cello, wouldn’t you agree?”**

**Rafael spread his hands, as if to encompass an imaginary audience. He turned to Mel Sayres:**

**“It appears that Mr. Baker comes all the way from Washington D.C., in the United States, just to receive a lesson in revolutionary re-education!” Rafael stood up, excused himself for the moment, and went into the next room to ask his secretary to find him some items in the files. For the first time that afternoon, Malcolm Sayres spoke up:**

**“Mr. Baker, do you realize that you’re asking my client to comment on the ideas and actions of another party, one that may not even exist! Aren’t you overstepping your authority? Are you trying to get him to incriminate himself?”**

**“Take it easy, Mr. Sayres. You ACLU types find some kind of government conspiracy in a cup of coffee! I thought we were talking like old friends. I’d like to believe that the HIPR is as interested in finding the monsters who did this as we are.” Baker turned to Montoya who had just re-entered the office.**

**“Rafael, you know that if you don’t want to answer any of my questions you’re perfectly within your rights. Were you offended by what I just asked you by the way?”**

**“Not at all, Mr. Baker.” Rafael’s secretary, Maria Flores, came out of the adjoining room and handed him a sheaf of newspaper clippings about the Casals Festival in San Juan . He looked them over briefly, then returned to addressing George Baker:**

**“ It should not be difficult, even for a man like you, Mr. Baker, to understand why the name of Pablo Casals evokes resentment in many of Puerto Ricans. It is not so much the man himself as his historical associations. As you yourself have said, he was a pleasant sort of man, even a courageous one, as he demonstrated through his life-long opposition to Franco.**

**“Sir! He was *not* a *progressive* - he was an arch-*reactionary*!” Montoya spit out the word as if it were the most repulsive word in the vocabulary, “He inherited the worst sort of *lese-majesté* pseudo-liberalism of the aristocratic circles that nurtured him as a young man and gave him his musical education. This is obvious from his writings.**

**“Look, sir!”. Montoya handed over a page containing selected quotations from Casals’ writings: “Here is an example from *Joys and Sorrows*, his autobiography. Read it: you’ll find that he never missed an opportunity to suck up to kings, queens, princes: anyone with royal blood! With the millions he earned from his concerts and records he built himself a baroque palace in the Spanish coastal resort of San Salvador.**

**“Yet at times, I admit, he could be something like a ‘friend of the people’. There is no contradiction in this, Mr. Baker. After all, he came from the villages, from the people, there was nothing bourgeois in his origins. And it is not uncommon that a bourgeois artist should, from time to time, be possessed of confused humanitarian sentiments.**

**“But, Mr. Baker, sentiments and pleasant feelings are not enough! The *Huelga para la Independenzia de Puerto Rico* does not see individuals as the direct causes of social injustice. The causes of injustice arise through the dialectic process of history! We do not build up a ridiculous melodrama of heroes and villains. We do not encourage a cult of personality.**

**“There is a right way to think about social issues, and a wrong way. Looked at in this way, all of Casals ideas were wrong! Confused! Backward! Injurious to the final triumph of the proletariat! Of course certain individuals may become identified with positive and negative aspects of social development. There can be no doubt that Casals was regarded by Puerto Rico’s intelligentsia as a prominent symbol of the cultural imperialism of the ruling class.**

**“He brought his friends , all musicians from the hardened and corrupt establishments of Europe and the United States, to San Juan. They played at his festivals, they were toasted as celebrities by the puppets in the government. They lorded it over us as if we were a nation of ignorant peasants. They instilled in our people a sense of the inferiority of Puerto Rico’s own indigenously created music.**

**“Then Don Pablo went to Washington, to play at the White House for President Kennedy, the brutal butcher who planned the futile Bay of Pigs invasion, the greedy swine who prepared the industrial rape of our island paradise through Operation Bootstrap. He promoted the career of the turncoat governor, Munoz Marin, when all Latin America looked to Fidel Castro for inspiration and direction.**

**So! It comes as no surprise that, when his Yanqui friends invade Cuba, your Pablo Casals goes to the UN to play his “Song of the Birds”! Montoya laughed, as if one couldn’t imagine anything more ridiculous.**

**“He answers pigs with birds! And for this the ‘civilized’ world loves him and calls him a great humanitarian! Do not be surprised if those of us who have a developed political consciousness see Pablo Casals as a class enemy!”**

**Rafael Montoya had spoken with more heat than discretion. Baker, who had been furiously taking notes, stared at Montoya as if he were finally beginning to hear the kind of rhetoric he’d been looking for:**

**“And you continue to maintain that the Huelga has no grudge against Pablo Casals?”**

**“Casals, Mr. Baker, was a glamorous celebrity, a kind of movie star for the intellectuals! People like him are never anything more than insipid pawns to be manipulated by the power elites and corrupt social institutions that fatten them up for their own sinister purposes. Pablo Casals could no more have brought about world peace with his sentimental Christmas music, than the *Jibaros*  can hope to free Puerto Rico by planting bombs!”**

**“I see!” Baker sprang out of his chair. With an accusing finger pointing an accusing finger at Montoya, he leaned over the desk: “ *If planting a bomb in the Academy of Music could bring about your version of independence for Puerto Rico, you think somebody should do it! Isn’t that right?* ”**

**Malcolm Sayres intervened: “You invited me here, Rafael, as your advisor. This conversation should stop right here!”**

**“So, Mal! You would have me leave these distinguished gentlemen with the impression that the Huelga is a mob of insane bomb-throwing fanatics! I do not intend to give them that satisfaction. No, Mr. Baker”, he turned back to him with fury:**

**“ We do not believe that terriorism is the right way to liberate our country. We would not engage in it, even if it succeeded! Mr. Baker, I invite you , here and now, to search these headquarters from basement to attic. I even invite you to my house.” He bowed in a ridiculous gesture of hospitality*: Mi casa es su casa* ! You will not find a single incendiary device or deadly weapon.”**

**Baker sat down again, his aggressive manner giving way to his usual state of lassitude. He waved a palm flabby as a slab of chicken fat indicating that even the suggestion of such a possibility was absurd:**

**“ Take it easy, Rafael. You won’t find us coming around in the morning with axes and a search warrant. This isn’t South America!”**

**Montoya suppressed the obvious retort; he could no longer stand the sight of Baker. Instead he returned, self-consciously, to the chair behind his desk, sat down and returned to proof-reading his article. He acted as if he no longer thought that George Baker was sitting there. Five minutes passed before he looked up again, a look of surprise on his face at discovering that the FBI agents were still present.**

**“No Mr. Baker”, he smiled in a weary fashion, “We do not bomb concerts.”**

**“Okay. But you do believe in armed revolution, don’t you? When I was here yesterday I picked up one of your manuals on guerilla warfare. It was fascinating reading through it after dinner. Hank, could you get me a copy?”**

**Hank examined the literature table for a manual of guerilla warfare in either Spanish or English. He couldn’t find one.**

**“Not matter. The point is, Rafael, you do have such a book for sale in this office. Isn’t that right?”**

**“ My lawyer is right here, Mr. Baker. You can talk to him. What we believe or do not believe is none of your business.”**

**George Baker did a good job of feigning an upsurge of righteous indignation. He slammed a fist on the desk: “It becomes my business when 50 innocent people are trampled to death because you people want to make war on the United States of America!”**

**Montoya’s self-control had reached the breaking point. Rather than using his fist he slammed a book down on his disk and yelled :**

**“ *See how the racist yanqui talks* ! Who is it who violates every statute of international law by occupying our country? Or is it perhaps Puerto Rico that occupies the United States? Who has been in a state of war against us, the autonomous republic of Puerto Rico, for almost one hundred years? Who destroyed our forests, plundered our mineral wealth, trampled our manhood, degraded our youth, infected us with heroin, humiliated us with welfare, prostitution, organized crime, military bases, atomic weapons, the military draft? Who is violating our civil rights? Get out of this office, you ass-sucking lackey! Send President Carter, that fool who talks about human rights and does nothing, to us the next time you have any questions to ask us!! Get out I say! Take yourself and your two slimy henchmen off our premises!!”**

**George Baker rose to his full height, meeting Montoya’s stare head-on:**

**“Mr. Montoya: why were members of your political organization picketing the Academy of Music in Philadelphia on the evening of December 24th, only hours before the bomb threat was delivered?”**

**“Don’t answer that!” snapped Sayres, alarmed.**

**“Yes! I *will* answer the FBI pig!” Rafael Montoya had been tricked into a fit of outrage only to be expected of someone of strong political convictions:**

**“You can ask me any question and I will not be afraid to answer it. We are not afraid of you, nor of anything you can do to us. Our demonstrators picketed the Academy of Music because some of our members are fools who still believe that this is a free country! They picketed the Academy because Hernando Guzman had been invited to give one of his craven speeches. We picketed the Academy because whenever lovers of music think of Puerto Rico they think of Pablo Casals, whereas in fact Casals has nothing whatsoever to do with Puerto Rico. Did you know Mr. George Baker? I learned just the other day that there is a street in the little village where Casals lived during the second imperialist war , the village of Prades, named “San Juan de Puerto Rico”! That’s all that the great Pablo ever did for us: a street name in a small town in France!”**

**George Baker snickered, from embarrassment or some other reason:**

**“You’re saying that – er – Pablo Casals was an agent of ,uh, ‘American Imperialism’? Isn’t that right, Mr. Montoya?”**

**Rafael roared with laughter: “Pablo Casals was a doddering old fool. No amount of ‘brainwashing’ could put a new political idea in that dense skull of his. Why argue over a man whose backwardness was due to stupidity rather than ideology?”**

**“That’s fairly strong language, Mr. Montoya! He must have been pretty intelligent to play the cello as well as he did …. Look here, Montoya, we’re not here to argue over the brains of Pablo Casals! We’ve already taken up too much of your time…”**

**George Baker hauled himself out of his seat, retrieved his hat and coat and made ready to leave. Montoya refused to shake hands with him, but Sayres didn’t object; they’d met many times in the past in analogous circumstances. As he maneuvered his agents out the door, Baker turned to Montoya and said:**

**“Mr. Montoya. You don’t need to worry that we’ll be coming back. We welcome your continuing cooperation and help in tracking down the authors of the Academy of Music disaster. This matter affects all of us. We ask you to keep yourself available for further questioning in case any new information turns up . Mr. Montoya ….Mr. Sayres …. ”**

**They bowed out clumsily, like cops. Malcolm Sayres also made ready to leave:**

**“Rafael, you were a damn fool!” he swore, replacing several documents into his briefcase. Rafael made a despairing gesture:**

**“Absolutely, Mal. A capital, a prize-winning fool! I realize that. But suppose we’d left him thinking there’s something we’re trying to hide. I lost my composure After 4 days of questioning I blew it. I agree. I gave them what they wanted to hear”**

**“They’ll be back; you know that?”**

**“Of course”**

**“I’ve been around, Rafael. I’ve seen this kind of harassment many times. When I told you to shut up, you should have done just that.”**

**“What else can I say, Mal? You’re right. It’s over and done with. I have to get back to work. There’s a meeting of the NYC chapter tonight; we’re going to decide if it’s time to go underground.”**

**“Speaking in my capacity as your lawyer, Rafael, I advise against any such action. Speaking as a personal friend : take care of yourself.”**

**“Thanks for everything, Mal. I’ll call you tomorrow.”**

**At that night’s meeting it was decided that the HIPR could wait out the storm. The prediction was overly optimistic. When Rafael returned the next morning he found the headquarters vandalized from top to bottom: cabinets overturned, furniture hacked to shreds, files removed, papers scattered everywhere. Rafael took one look at the devastation, turned on his heels and ran. He didn’t even contact his wife until he’s reached the airport and bought his ticket. He boarded a plane for Montreal, where several of his comrades had already been contacted.**

**Rafael didn’t make it past Canadian immigration. He was kept in custody overnight then handed back to the Americans and the FBI the next day. Eventually he wound up at the Foley square courthouse, under indictment for conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism.**