

New Jersey

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Freed foes of Castro are hailed

By MIGUEL PEREZ

Two anti-Castro Cubans whose convictions in the assassination of former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier were overturned by a federal appeals court last fall received a heroes' welcome in northern New Jersey this weekend after being freed from a federal prison to await a new trial.

Guillermo Novo Sampol and Alvin Ross Diaz returned to Union City Thursday night after U.S. District Judge Barrington Parker ordered their release following a hearing in Washington at which members of the New Jersey Cuban community put up a \$200,000 bond for each of them. The money was raised by a committee of anti-Castro Cubans who got 400 businessmen to contribute \$1,000 apiece.

Shouting "Viva Cuba Libre" (Long Live Free Cuba) and singing the Cuban national anthem, more than 200 community leaders welcomed Novo and Ross to Union City Friday night. They had

gathered at the Liceo Cubano auditorium to honor the two men at a press conference that turned into a rally.

NOVO AND ROSS thanked the Cuban community in that predominantly Cuban city for raising the money and vowed to continue working against the Marxist government of Fidel Castro.

"It shows our desire to back the freedom fighters and all those who are fighting for what eventually has to happen—the liberation of Cuba," said Novo, the leader of the anti-Castro Cuban Nationalist Movement. "We are here to reaffirm our determination to free our country."

They said they are innocent, and expressed confidence in the outcome of their upcoming trial.

"At times I was convinced that we would never leave that prison again," Novo said.

Novo and ROSS, whose second trial will begin on May 11, were convicted in March 1980 of taking part in the car-bomb murder of Letelier and his American aide, Ronni Moffitt, on Washington's Embassy Row in September 1976. They were sentenced to life imprisonment.

IN OVERTURNING the murder convictions, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last September that the two men must be tried again because two key prosecution witnesses were government informants who were inmates in the same cellblocks as the two Cubans. The court ruled that the informants' testimony was inadmissible.