

Clear two in Letelier murder

Washington (Combined Dispatches)—Two anti-Castro Cuban exiles from New Jersey were acquitted yesterday in their retrial in the car-bombing assassination of former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier on a Washington street.

The U.S. District Court jury, after three days of deliberations, found Guillermo Novo Sampol, 41, and Alvin Ross Diaz, 48, both of Union City, innocent of five counts related to the slaying of Letelier and his American aide, Ronni K. Moffitt, on Sept. 21, 1976. Both men had been charged with conspiracy, murder of a foreign official, two counts of first-degree murder and murder with use of an explosive.

However, Novo was found guilty of two counts of making false statements to a grand jury investigating the case. Judge Barrington Parker allowed Novo to remain free under \$200,000 bond until sentencing, set for June 28. He faces up to 10 years imprisonment, less the three years he served after his 1978 arrest in Miami.

NOVO AND ROSS were convicted

in 1979 of the murders and sentenced to life imprisonment, but a federal appeals court last Sept. 15 ordered a new trial on grounds the government improperly used testimony from the defendants' cellmates.

Letelier and Moffitt died when a remote-control bomb exploded under their car as they rode to work near Washington's embassy row. Letelier, 44, was a top official in the Marxist regime of Salvador Allende and an outspoken critic of the military junta that overthrew it in 1973. Moffitt, 25, worked with Letelier at the Institute for Policy Studies.

Michael Townley, an American working for the Chilean secret police, admitted placing the bomb. He was allowed to plead guilty to a conspiracy charge in return for testifying against Novo and Ross, whom he identified as members of the New Jersey-based Cuban Nationalist Movement recruited for the plot.

IN THE FIRST trial, the defense tried to blame the murders on the CIA and pictured Townley as a secret U.S.



Guillermo Novo Sampol (l.), previously convicted in murder of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier (r.), was acquitted yesterday.

agent. In the retrial, the defense contended Townley was testifying for the prosecution under Chilean orders.

After the verdict, Ross told reporters, "I'm going to get my life together

and start working and try to overthrow (Cuban leader Fidel) Castro." Novo hugged his New York attorneys, Paul Goldberger and Lawrence Dubin, and said, "Justice has been done."