

Retrial in Letelier Murder Case May Go to Jury Here Tomorrow

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The retrial of two men accused of the car-bomb murder of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier is expected to conclude with final arguments today, and the jury probably will begin deliberations tomorrow.

The trial of Guillermo Novo Sampol and Alvin Ross Diaz, in its 12th day in U.S. District Court here, has proceeded far more rapidly than the original trial in 1979, which lasted five weeks.

Time has been saved in the present trial by the absence of two key prosecution witnesses. A federal appeals court ruled last year that the two witnesses, men who had been in jail with the defendants, should not have been permitted to testify.

In addition, U.S. District Judge Barrington D. Parker, apparently mindful of the frequent bench conferences and disputes over testimony that delayed the first trial, has forced both sides to keep the case moving at a brisk pace.

The two defendants were convicted in the original trial of the Sept. 21, 1976, murder of Letelier and an American associate, Ronni Karpen Moffitt, but the conviction was over-

turned last September by the U. Court of Appeals.

On Monday, Parker threatened to let the jury know that the defense was responsible for delays if the defense attorneys did not have all their witnesses present in the courthouse and ready to testify yesterday.

Defense attorneys Lawrence A. Dubin and Paul A. Goldberger finished presenting their witnesses in less than two days, and concluded with the brief testimony of two witnesses who had not appeared during the first trial.

The witnesses were Humberto Medrano, a Cuban-American columnist and television commentator living in Miami, and MariaLuisa Matos, whose husband was a political prisoner in Cuba for 20 years.

They testified in support of the defense's contention that Novo and Ross had been in contact with Chilean officials only to enlist their support for seeking release of political prisoners in Cuba.

The bombing allegedly was ordered by the top officials in DINA, the Chilean secret police, to silence Letelier, an outspoken critic of the Chilean regime. Novo and Ross are accused of working with a DINA agent, Michael V. Townley, to arrange the bombing.

The defense yesterday was attempting to refute evidence that Novo, Ross and other members of an anti-Castro Cuban organization known as the Cuban Nationalist Movement had met with Chilean officials to offer to perform illegal actions in exchange for support from Chile.

Yesterday, the judge excused one of the four remaining alternate jurors, who thus became the second member of the panel to be excused in the last two days.

The judge did not disclose the reason for the dismissal.

On Monday, Parker excused one of the 12 regular jurors, apparently because the juror had been told of a possible threat to blow up his car.

Court sources said, however, that the alternate apparently was excused because of a personal problem, and that no threats had been made against him.

W. STAR
MAY 27/81 WEDNESDAY