

In Union City, the Memories Of the Bay of Pigs Don't Die

By DAVID VIDAL

The assassination of the Cuban-American refugee leader Eulalio José Negrín last week in Union City, N.J., dramatically extended the list of terrorist attacks attributed to right-wing Cuban organizations in the New York-New Jersey area.

Since February 1975, responsibility for 13 bombings in this region — most recently at the Cuban mission to the United Nations on Oct. 27, two weeks after the visit of Fidel Castro — has been claimed by the clandestine, anti-Castro organization Omega 7. So too was the shooting of Mr. Negrín, who had been branded a "traitor" by militants.

In April, Carlos Muñoz Varela, who helped arrange flights to Cuba, was murdered in Puerto Rico; responsibility was claimed by Comando Cero, a counterpart of Omega 7.

Federal authorities believe Omega 7 is a pseudonym for the Cuban Nationalist Movement, whose "northern zone" headquarters is in Union City. Four members of the movement were convicted in the bomb slaying in Washington in 1976 of former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier. Two members who remain at large are sought for a Kennedy Airport bomb blast March 25, which, had it gone off in flight, could have killed 157 airline passengers.

Union City, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan, is now the hub of an ethnic Cuban population second in density only to Miami's; more than half the city of 70,000 is of Cuban descent.

In this community Mr. Negrín, a naturalized American, developed political ambitions and social concerns. Running as a Republican, he tried unsuccessfully for the state Senate seat held by William V. Musto, a powerful Democrat who is also Mayor of Union City. He was better known, however, for his work in reuniting divided Cuban families and helping Cubans visit their homeland as an outgrowth of the "dialogue" between the Castro regime and moderates in the exile community.

This exchange was carried out in the fall of 1978 by the so-called Committee of 75, to which Mr. Negrín belonged (and which actually included 140 people — priests, academicians, professionals, youths who had cut cane, even veterans of the Bay of Pigs Brigade). The Cuban right, however, called the "dialogue" a charade and vilified its supporters in articles in the small-circulation tabloids it controls.

Surviving members of the Committee of 75 in Puerto Rico, Florida, New Jersey and New York say they are under threat of death. Following the Muñoz and Negrín slayings and amid general lack of confidence in the local police, some have asked for a Federal investigation of an alleged "campaign of terror" against them. But Federal officials so far have been

reluctant to get involved under civil rights statutes and have said they lack jurisdiction under other laws.

The right-wing organizations and their leaders are known to both the exile community and law enforcement officials. While the participation of some in illegal activities is suspected, it has been proven only in the Letelier case.

There is also a suspicion among investigators and fearful community residents that political terrorism has meshed with racketeering interests. It is widely reported in the Union City Cuban community, for example, that extortion of merchants is a source of funds for right-wing elements.

The active membership of the right-wing groups is not believed to number more than a few hundred, but their influence is large. The principal organizations in this area are the Cuban Nationalist Movement, led by Armando Santana of Union City; and an umbrella group called the Bloc of Cuban Revolutionary Organizations, which includes civic, cultural and social organizations from Elizabeth, N.J. and nearby cities.

Neither group claims responsibility for terrorist acts. But their leaders have lent moral and financial support to convicted terrorists such as Guillermo and Ignacio Novo, the Union City brothers convicted in the Letelier slaying.

Mr. Santana has been to prison for the attempted bombing of the Academy of Music Theatre in Man-



The New York Times / Carl Gossett
Cubans at the Cubatravel Agency in Union City sign up for tours.

Associated Press
Eulalio José Negrín

hattan in 1976. A principal voice of the bloc is Dr. Héctor Wiltz, a psychiatrist who is often quoted on exile issues in the Spanish-language press.

Even in the political context of a community that is conservative and unsympathetic to President Castro, the organized right must be considered a fringe movement. But it is tightly organized, politically influential and well-financed.

Its influence on the Spanish-language media is evident. A prominent female announcer for station WBNX lost her job this year after an interview with the Rev. Andrés Reyes, a participant in the dialogue. Father Reyes himself was transferred to Newark in May after anonymous callers threatened to blow up the school of the Holy Family Church where he served in Union City.

Last year, a bomb was exploded outside El Diario-La Prensa, where editors frequently get threats against Manuel de Dios Unanue, a Cuban reporter who has investigated the right-wing groups. Ending its silence on the situation, the paper ran an editorial on Friday reporting threats from "this lunatic fringe" and vowing that it would not be intimidated.

Tabloids with names such as "War," "Struggle," and "The Nationalist" trumpet the cause of anti-Castroism in strident rhetoric and often publish barely masked threats of violence. The tabloids are distributed in shops frequented by Cubans.

The political influence of the right in Union City is associated with Julia Valdivia, the top Cuban-American aide to Mayor Musto and a frequent of events sponsored by the anti-Castro organizations.

But much of the power of the right stems from fear. "Terrorism here is worse than in the era of McCarthy," said the Rev. Eduardo de Zayas, who replaced Father Reyes at the Holy Family Church. "The accusation of Communist comes against anyone who moves toward peace."

There was even fear that Mr. Negrín's corpse would attract the radicals. He was buried outside Union City, and his fearful family did not invite friends.

For the living, the new concern is for the charter flights of the airline Cubana de Aviacion. They were due to begin flying people direct from Newark to Havana tomorrow.