

Exiles have many views of Bosch

To Cuban community, he is terrorist, victim — and relic

By CELIA W. DUGGER 7-2-89-1B
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The public face of exile outrage over the deportation of anti-Castro militant Orlando Bosch masks a diversity of opinion about his case in Miami's Cuban community.

The images that have dominated the news — of Bosch's weeping daughter, of hundreds of his supporters standing in a driving rain to protest his deportation, of Cuban-American politicians lobbying for his freedom — tell part, but not all, of the story.

The spectrum of opinion on Bosch includes not just righteous anger for a hero unjustly treated, but also pity for a sickly old man and his bereaved

family, and indifference to his fate.

The vexing mysteries of the 62-year-old pediatrician's case leave some Cuban-Americans wondering what exactly Bosch did in the years when he roamed Latin America, plotting sabotage and bombings in his crusade against Communist Cuba, and what he symbolizes today.

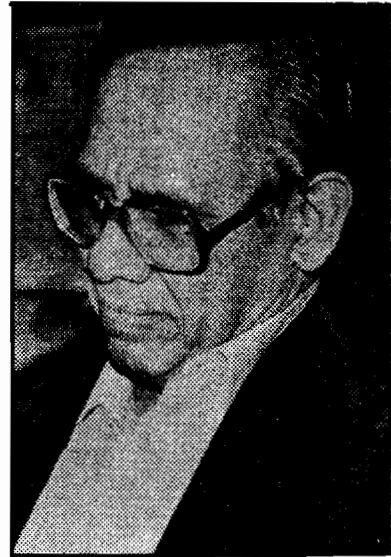
Is he a lonely hero who gave up a comfortable life in Miami to battle communism abroad? Is he the terrorist mastermind of the bombing of a Cuban jetliner in which 73 people perished? Or is he simply a hapless victim wrongly imprisoned for terrorist acts of which he was never convicted?

The feelings of two exiles frame the extremes of opinion, with Cuban radio personality Armando

Perez-Roura on one end, and shopping mall manager Nelson Diaz on the other.

In a commentary on WAQI-AM *Radio Mambi*, Perez-Roura, a hard-line anti-Castro warrior of the radio waves, painted the deportation order against Bosch as one of many American betrayals of the exile battle to free Cuba from communism.

"Dr. Bosch has all the backing a leader wins when he embodies the sacrifice of a nation that has been betrayed by all governments that should have remained at our side, but have instead stabbed us with the dagger of treason," Perez-Roura said, his resonant voice quivering with



ORLANDO BOSCH: Has clung to militant ways.

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BOSCH, FROM 1B

emotion.

Diaz, manager of a downtown shopping mall, feels emotion of a different sort for Bosch. Diaz was a taxi driver in Cuba when the Cuban jetliner was bombed in 1976, killing all those aboard. A friend's daughter perished in the explosion.

Bosch was jailed in Venezuela for 11 years on charges of planning the bombing, and acquitted. The man who was Bosch's driver was convicted of the crime in 1986. Bosch told U.S. investigators he was not involved in the bombing, but approved of it.

Diaz, who came to the United States in 1981, believes Bosch is a terrorist.

"A co-worker of mine, a taxi driver, his daughter was a flight attendant on that plane. How can you understand someone trying to get freedom for his country by blowing up a plane with innocent people on board? If he did that, how can I care

about where they send him now?" asks Diaz.

More typical, perhaps, than either Perez-Roura's or Diaz's view is that of Leslie Pantin Jr., past president of the Kiwanis Club of Little Havana, founding organizer of the Calle Ocho festival, and Miami civic leader.

Pantin sees Bosch as neither hero nor martyr, but as "a poor guy who already did enough time in jail in Venezuela. You could leave him here in Florida under a probationary deal. The government should set him free and let the issue die."

Pantin feels badly for Bosch's wife, Adriana, and his daughters Lourdes and Myriam, who have fought for his release.

"The girls I've met, and the wife. We always help them out in Calle Ocho with a booth to collect signatures," Pantin says.

Despite all the attention the Bosch case has gotten in the news, Pantin says he rarely hears it mentioned as he moves through the community. When he chats with

friends and business associates, the hottest topics are the Supreme Court decision on burning the flag and the race for Claude Pepper's seat.

Maria Elena Prio, a Miami lawyer whose father was the last democratically elected president of Cuba, seconds that view.

"I just don't hear people talking about it. I don't see any fervor," she said. "He's been gone so long."

The White House says it hasn't been overwhelmed with callers pleading for Bosch's pardon. Only six of the 1,600 calls to the White House on Wednesday were about Bosch. Thursday, there were only two calls. "Obviously, that is a very small percentage of the calls," said White House press aide Paul Luthringer.

Bosch, now a tired revolutionary who suffers from angina and stomach trouble, is a relic of the past, not a threat to national security, many exiles believe.

He symbolizes the failed strategy

of violent sabotage against Castro's government — a strategy encouraged by the U.S. government in the early 1960s.

More than 20 years ago, Bosch and several co-conspirators fired a bazooka at a Polish freighter docked at the Port of Miami, denting the hull. Bosch got caught. It was the only time he was convicted of anything.

Through the years, Bosch refused to give up his guerrilla war ways, even as his doctor and lawyer friends from Cuba settled into respectable, prosperous lives in Miami.

In the 1980s, Miami's most powerful exiles, wealthy members of the Cuban American National Foundation, have channeled their anti-Castro zeal into politics, winning congressional passage of Radio Marti, a U.S. broadcast to Cuba.

Foundation chairman Jorge Mas Canosa said Bosch has promised to follow the laws of the United States and should be released. "This ailing old man is no threat to national security. He doesn't have a following anymore," Mas Canosa said.

But the U.S. Justice Department believes Bosch is an unrepentant terrorist. Based on secret intelligence reports, the U.S. government accuses Bosch of sending bombs to

numerous Cuban embassies and attempting to assassinate a Cuban diplomat in 1975.

Some exiles, like lawyer Rafael Peñalver, believe the Bush administration may be taking a hard line on the Bosch case hoping to win Castro's cooperation in fighting drug smuggling and continuing deportation of Mariel felons.

Why else would a Republican administration with close ties to Miami's conservative Cuban exiles refuse to free Bosch on the basis of allegations never proved in court?

"There's a general feeling that Castro has imposed on the U.S. a condition that Orlando Bosch cannot be freed if there is to be a warming with Cuba," Peñalver said.

Others, such as Florida International University sociologist Lisandro Perez, wonder if there is substance to what the Justice Department says, especially because the politically easy way out would be for the government to free Bosch.

"On the one hand, Bosch has sacrificed a lot. He's old. His daughters and family are seeking his release," Perez said. "On the other hand, if the Justice Department isn't releasing him, they must have a reason . . . I feel sympathy for the man, but I don't have the full story on him."