

Intimidation led to death

By PAUL MOSES

Eulalio Jose Negrin was never shy about saying there were people out to kill him. He told police, FBI agents, reporters, and anyone else who would listen. The dark-eyed, 38-year-old Cuban exile never doubted he would some day confront the person behind the threatening letters and phone calls, and he sometimes walked the streets of Union City carrying an automatic rifle.

It began with sugar dumped in his car's gas tank, and escalated with the bombing of his Cuban social action office in Weehawken. But despite the threats, he continued to criticize the violent elements of the anti-Castro movement in North Hudson.

He labled Omega 7, the group claiming the responsibility for many anti-Castro bombings, as "gangsters." His enemies, equally bitter, denounced him as a traitor for negotiating the release of political prisoners with Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Negrin went beyond name-calling. He could weave intriguing conspiracies involving narcotics in North Hudson, politics, and intelligence networks. When he spoke about these things, he usually shouted, waving a fist and shaking his head until his dark hair flipped onto his forehead.

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Eulalio Negrin

Foes warned: 2 weeks to live

EDITOR'S NOTE: This past week, Eulalio Jose Negrin, in what is believed to have been his last interview, spoke with Dispatch reporter Camille Kenny about a threat to kill him and other matters.

By CAMILLE KENNY

Eulalio Jose Negrin sounded excited and anxious, as he usually did, when I spoke to him for the last time on Tuesday.

During the conversation, he mentioned almost parenthetically the latest death threat a week earlier from Omega 7. He said it gave him only two weeks to live.

This was not unusual. Negrin claimed he had been threatened often, either by letter or telephone, since his first trip to Cuba a year ago as a member of the Committee of 75, which met with Castro to discuss the release of Cuban political prisoners.

He mentioned also that he was not concerned about the bomb which destroyed his storefront office on Park Avenue in Weehawken last March.

"They can bomb the office, but they cannot stop the New Jersey Cuban Program," Negrin said.

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Intimidation capped by assassination

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Law-enforcement officials did not know what to believe. At one point they discussed whether to impanel a federal grand jury to hear Negrin's many allegations, allowing them to prosecute him for perjury if the stories were untrue.

Negrin's enemies also told stories about him. They insisted he was a puppet of Castro, the hated man who had driven them out of their homes 20 years ago. And indeed, after Negrin and 74 other exiles went to Havana to meet with Castro in November 1978, Negrin's life began to change.

The many North Hudson residents with relatives in Castro's prisons had to deal with Negrin, who was previously little known, in order to see their loved ones. Negrin claimed his social action program had over 500 dues-paying members, making it one of the largest organizations of any kind in the North Hudson area. This is where he found the money for a new stationwagon labeled "New Jersey Cuban Program" and for the now-destroyed office on Park Avenue in Weehawken, Negrin said.

His enemies charged that Negrin's program was actually financed by the Cuban government.

Negrin tried to ignore these accusations, and fixed his eyes to the future. He dreamed of the day the Cuban community would assume political control of Union City and West New York—when Bergenline Avenue would be known as Havana Avenue.

"You think I'm kidding," he said. "But some day it will happen."

A journalist without a newspaper, he saved every article written about him in the Spanish-language press, including those that published the veiled death threats.

Negrin told death is near

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Last Tuesday, Negrin was more interested in discussing his New Jersey Cuban Program and his continuing activities to obtain release of political prisoners in Cuba. Negrin said his method was the only effective way of gaining release for the prisoners. He said he was presently negotiating with the Cuban government and the United States State Department for the release from Cuban prisons of those who had served in the army of former Cuban president Fulgencio Batista.

Negrin said he frequently traveled to Havana and Washington, D.C. to negotiate the release of prisoners, saying to accomplish this, it was necessary to negotiate with Castro's government.

"Castro is the one keeping them in prison, and he is the only one who can release them," he said. "What good does it do to go to anyone else?"

He criticized other local Cuban groups for what he called fighting among themselves, and said all should work together for the release of prisoners. He said he was doing this constantly.

"That is why I dropped the (assault) charges against (Cuban Nationalist Movement leader Armando) Santana," he said. "While he was sitting in court, I was in Washington."

Negrin added that it is possible to negotiate with Castro, who, although a Communist, is not a fanatic. "That is why the United States is in this situation in Iran," he said. "You can negotiate with Communists, but you cannot negotiate with fanatics."

Negrin also declared the release of several hundred political prisoners over the past year was the result of the negotiations of the Committee of 75, which many in the Cuban community here said is a group composed of pro-Castro Communists.

"Some in the Committee of 75 are Communists and some are not," he said. "We are concerned with the release of prisoners and the reunification of (Cuban) families."