

# is sentenced to life in jail

# Omega 7 leader gets life for bombings, 2 murders

Omega 7 chief eligible for parole in 1993

By JOE STARITA 11-10-84  
Herald Staff Writer

NEW YORK — Eduardo Arocena, a Cuban exile who founded the anti-Castro terrorist group Omega 7, was sentenced in federal court on Friday to life in prison plus 35 years for his role in two murders and a spate of bombings in Miami and New York.

"The court has no doubt that Arocena steadfastly believes" in his anti-Castro, anti-Communist campaign, U.S. District Judge Robert Ward said moments before sentencing.

"The problem is that the means Arocena followed to achieve his political end are in violation of the laws of this country."

Arrested by FBI agents in Miami in July 1983, the 42-year-old former New Jersey dockworker will be eligible for parole in about 8½ years, but U.S. prosecutors said they would argue strenuously to prevent such an early release.

In a final presentence summation to the judge, Miami defense attorney Luis Fernandez invoked the names of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Menachem Begin and Bob Dylan to try to show that Arocena is not a terrorist, but rather a freedom-fighting Cuban patriot who loves the United States.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Tabak responded by saying that Arocena is a cowardly killer who, lacking the courage to conduct his personal war in Cuba, sought refuge in the United States where he endangered the lives of innocent U.S. citizens with his craven acts of terrorism.

In an unusual speech to the judge before he was sentenced, Arocena said that although he himself had nothing to do with the activities he is convicted of, he wholeheartedly supports the bombings and murders.

"With all the respect to your honor and to the legal system," Arocena said, "I will never bow my face in any situation. Nor will my knees tremble in any situation."

"If I have to rot in jail, I will rot in pleasure," he said as the judge looked up, smiled briefly and looked back down. "I don't have to feel sorry about anything. I'm in agreement with all of the acts my compatriots have done. Every one of them."

Arocena had pleaded not guilty to the charges against him and has

AROCENA / from 1A

been held in lieu of \$750,000 bond since his arrest 16 months ago. Judge Ward said that Arocena will be allowed to apply the time he already has served against his sentence.

Arocena's wife, Miriam, said the conviction is just one more example of a country growing dangerously soft on communism.

"Poor America," she said. "I am sorry for this country. My husband is a good father, a good husband and a good Cuban patriot. He is not a terrorist."

On Sept. 22, a 12-member jury convicted Arocena of participating in numerous terrorist activities, ranging from perjury, bombings and drug dealing to the the first-degree murder of a Cuban diplomat.

Judge Ward gave Arocena a life sentence for his part in the murder of Felix Garcia Rodriguez, an attache to the Cuban Mission who was machine-gunned to death in Queens in 1980.

He also was convicted of the attempted car-bomb assassination of the Cuban U.N. Ambassador Raul Roa and of ordering bombings at the Cuban, Soviet, Venezuelan, Mexican and Nicaraguan diplomatic missions in New York and Miami, as well as bombings at Madison Square Garden and Kennedy Airport.

He was acquitted of a bombing at Lincoln Center.

Convicted on 25 counts of a 26-count federal indictment, Arocena faced a maximum sentence of three life terms plus 235 years.

Miami defense attorneys Fernandez and Humberto Aguilar said they would appeal the sentence. Arocena, who listened impassively as the sentence was translated into Spanish, also is under indictment in Miami on numerous federal charges.

Arocena appeared to hurt his own chances of an early parole with his final statement to the judge.

Declaring that he had been the innocent victim of a government witch-hunt, Arocena said that with every arrest of freedom-fighters like himself, the United States moves one step closer to a Communist takeover.

"I am ready to put up with whatever you have," said Arocena. "I'll take as many years as you have. I won't blink."

"If to struggle for my country, if to sacrifice my family is to be a terrorist, then I am a terrorist. Your honor, do your duty," Arocena concluded, "I've done mine."

Earlier, defense attorney Fernandez objected to the word 'terrorist' appearing 26 times in an eight-page presentence report on Arocena. He suggested that a number of prominent government leaders could be considered terrorists in some contexts.

In World War II, he noted, Roosevelt approved of the devas-



Eduardo Arocena: No regrets.

tating bombing of Dresden and Berlin, Germany, while Truman authorized the first use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At that point, Judge Ward interrupted the attorney, saying he did not believe the war analogies appropriate. "Those things happen when a state of war exists between two countries . . . and it is the sincere hope of everyone I'm sure that we never see another war."

Fernandez also quoted a line from a Bob Dylan song, telling the judge that it is difficult for non-Cubans to comprehend the loss of their homeland. "As Bob Dylan once said, 'You can't criticize what you don't understand,'" a line from *The Times*, *They Are A'Changing*.

The defense attorney journeyed far from the Manhattan courtroom Friday morning to cite yet another example.

"In Israel, perhaps at one time, Menachem Begin would have been called a terrorist," Fernandez said. "But now he is widely regarded as a hero."

Ward quickly interrupted, objecting to the analogy.

Begin, the judge pointed out, was fighting in his country to oust the British. Arocena, on the other hand, had been welcomed in this country as a political refugee.

If Arocena wanted to express his displeasure of the Cuban government while in this country, it should have been done "orally, or in writing, but it should not be expressed by killing and using explosive devices," Ward said.

Cuban exile reaction in Miami to Arocena's sentence was mostly one of disappointment.

Antonio Varona, president of the Cuban Patriotic Council, an umbrella exile group, said that in Arocena the U.S. government had found the perfect "scapegoat."

"I think it was never proven that Arocena had actually participated in any of the events nor that he was the mastermind behind it," said Varona. "The sentence is excessive and very unjust."

Varona said, however, that the council disapproved of terrorist activities in the United States.

Andres Nazario Sargen, presi-

dent of Alpha 66, a militant anti-Castro group, also said that the sentence was excessive. He said that Arocena was perceived in the Cuban community as a "fighter for the Cuban cause."

"We might disagree with his strategy, but we have to admire the person," Nazario said. "We each have our ways of fighting."

Alpha 66's way of fighting communism is through the infiltration of anti-Castro insurgents in the island to carry out acts of sabotage. According to Nazario, several of these raids have taken place this year.

"But we are constantly persecuted by the government that claims we are violating U.S. neutrality laws and several of our members have been imprisoned," Nazario said. "Arocena's sentencing is part of the government's persecution of the struggle for the liberation of Cuba."

Former newsman Emilio Milian, whose legs were blown off by a car bomb after he broadcast anti-terrorist editorials, thought the Arocena sentence was "fair."

"I have to condemn terrorism because I have been a victim of it," Milian said. "Terrorism has no place in a democratic system. Anyone who thinks that by blowing up bombs here in the United States, they are helping to defeat Fidel is just wrong."

This article was supplemented by information from Herald Staff Writer Barbara Gutierrez and Herald wire services.

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**Robert Ward  
U.S. District judge**

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