

Anti-abortion fanatic Eric Rudolph pleads guilty to terrorist bombings

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The right-wing American terrorist Eric Rudolph pleaded guilty Wednesday to the 1996 bombing at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, and to three subsequent bombings in Atlanta and Birmingham, Alabama. He killed two—Alice Hawthorne, who died at Olympic Park, and Robert Sanderson, an off-duty policeman working as a security guard at a Birmingham abortion clinic—and wounded 150 people.

Rudolph was captured in 2003 in rural Murphy, North Carolina, in the region where he had been in hiding for five years after witnesses saw him leaving the scene of the Birmingham bombing. He made a plea bargain with prosecutors to avoid a death sentence. Judges in Birmingham and Atlanta are expected to sentence the 38-year-old Rudolph in July to four consecutive life terms.

The plea bargain was also conditional on Rudolph providing information to the authorities about stockpiles of explosives he had accumulated over the past decade, which included a huge bomb, containing 25 pounds of high explosive, planted near the facility housing the police task force set up to apprehend him. Rudolph did not, however, supply any information about the assistance he must have received from anti-abortion and racist sympathizers, which allowed him to remain free for five years. Nor did he reveal whether he received technical and logistical assistance for the bombing campaign from co-thinkers in the anti-abortion movement.

The American media has given only perfunctory coverage to the Rudolph case, in keeping with a longstanding policy of downplaying the importance of domestic terrorists motivated by ultra-right and fascist politics. With the exception of September 11, 2001, however, the vast majority of those killed and injured in terrorist attacks over the past 20 years in

America have been victims of anti-abortion, racist or homophobic attackers. But the corporate-controlled media prefers to whip up hysteria about the danger of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, because this serves to build public support for the US military intervention in the Middle East.

If Eric Rudolph had been an Islamic extremist, waving the Koran instead of the Bible, there would have been far more television cameras and far more coverage of the case. The media would have been filled with speculation that the arrested man was only the tip of the iceberg of a much larger and more dangerous conspiracy requiring new repressive measures by the US government.

There was no such clamor after Rudolph's guilty plea. Nor was Rudolph ever described in the media as a "Catholic terrorist," since that label, although literally accurate, would be seen as a smear against 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide. There are no similar compunctions, however, to referring to members of Al Qaeda and similar organizations as "Muslim terrorists."

Following the entering of his guilty pleas, Rudolph's attorneys released an 11-page statement from the serial bomber in which he outlined his political views and debunked some of the press accounts of his motivations. The statement is rife with racist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic and homophobic comments. But significantly, Rudolph denied that he was an adherent of the fascistic Christian Identity religion, declaring, "I was born a Catholic and with forgiveness I hope to die one."

Much of Rudolph's statement is devoted to elaborating his view on abortion, in which he echoes the current teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that abortion is the murder of a child, which he then transforms into a justification for murdering the

abortionists.

“Abortion is murder,” he writes. “And when the regime in Washington legalized, sanctioned and legitimized this practice, they forfeited their legitimacy and moral authority to govern.”

He continues: “Because I believe that abortion is murder, I also believe that force is justified ... in an attempt to stop it,” adding, “whether these agents of the government are armed or otherwise, they are legitimate targets in the war to end this holocaust.”

In a particularly chilling passage, Rudolph refers to Emily Lyons, the abortion clinic nurse severely injured in the Birmingham blast—she has had to undergo 20 surgeries to treat her wounds—as “a knowing participant in this gruesome trade” and an “assistant killer.”

Rudolph carried out four terrorist attacks over a period of a year-and-a-half. The first, the bombing at Olympic Park on July 27, 1996, was intended to be the first of five daily explosions, with the purpose of disrupting the games and, if possible, forcing their postponement or cancellation. Rudolph says that he targeted the games in part to embarrass the pro-abortion US government, which was the host, and in part because, in his fascistic view, the Olympics, by bringing together athletes from throughout the world on an equal basis, promote the “despicable ideals” of “global socialism.”

After the first blast nearly went wrong because of equipment problems, Rudolph says he abandoned plans for additional bombings at the games, biding his time until January 16, 1997, when he set off two bombs at an office building in an Atlanta suburb which housed an abortion clinic. Six people were wounded. One month later, he bombed the rear patio of an Atlanta nightclub frequented by gays and lesbians, wounding five more.

After lying low for nearly a year, and shifting his operations to another major city only a short drive away, Rudolph carried out his most technically sophisticated attack, the bombing of the Birmingham abortion clinic. Whereas the other bombs were detonated by timers and crudely made, the Birmingham blast was more sophisticated and set off by remote control. The intent was to kill an abortion doctor, but when the security guard and nurse approached the package containing the bomb, Rudolph, watching from hiding, detonated it in their faces, killing the guard in cold blood and maiming the nurse.

Much of Rudolph’s 11-page statement is a polemic against anti-abortion groups that urge political pressure on Congress and the courts to outlaw abortion, rather than using force against clinics and doctors. He criticizes his fellow right-wingers for hypocrisy and for being too squeamish to sanction violence at home, even though they support US military violence overseas. “Answer me,” he asks, “is the *causus belli* of promoting democracy in the Middle East more weighty for waging war than the systematic murder of your own citizens?”

The connection Rudolph draws between imperialist war overseas and right-wing terrorist violence at home is instructive. In unleashing the American military to conduct violent attacks around the world, regardless of and in defiance of international law, the Bush administration is also setting into motion within America itself the most depraved and fascistic elements.

Timothy McVeigh was a veteran of the Persian Gulf War and an unsuccessful recruit to the Green Berets before he became a right-wing terrorist and blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 people. Eric Rudolph followed in his footsteps. The explosion of American military aggression in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere will produce new McVeighs and Rudolphs, who will bring home the criminal methods of imperialist war for use against the American people.



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