

Who Killed John Roselli?

WERE GOING TO tell you a little story now. Once there was a President who was murdered. His brother was murdered too. A long time after they died some very strange facts came to light. It turned out that while they were running the government, the government was trying to get two Mafia mobsters to arrange the murder of someone else—the head of a small, hostile neighbor state. It also turned out that one brother—the one who was President—apparently had a girlfriend who was the girlfriend as well of the mobsters. And one of the mobsters, whose nickname was Momo, was prominent on the list of criminals the President's brother was trying to put in jail. The story may sound complicated, but life is complicated, and the complications in this case got even more so. For when a committee of the Congress wanted the two mobsters to come and tell them something about all this, only one of them—the one named Johnny—came. The other one, Momo, was murdered in his house a week before they wanted him to testify. Johnny, however, told his story to one committee in the Congress and then came back—quietly—to tell some more things to another committee which was in fact looking into the murder of the President. Then Johnny went to Florida. Then no one could find him. Then some fishermen found him. Dead. In an oil drum.

But we haven't told you the strangest part of all yet, the part you're really not going to believe. It is that when the great national political community of solons, scribes, policemen, spies and managers of the general wellbeing heard about poor Johnny, they said: "Oh, my goodness." Some of them went farther, of course. They said: "Fancy that!" But most of them didn't say anything at all except: "Yawn."

Forgive us for lapsing into storybookese. We do it for a reason which is that the simple unadorned facts of the John and Robert Kennedy-Fidel Castro-CIA-Mafia-Momo Giancana-Johnny Roselli-Judith Exner-Church Committee-Schweiker Committee saga need to be put forward in stark outline for their magnitude to be understood. Is it really, as the sophisticated wisdom goes, "paranoid" on our part to brood about the suggestive and possibly monstrous interconnections between all these facts and to wonder why they are not the object of intense press and government scrutiny? What accounts for the general indifference in high places? What accounts for the eagerness with which we all seem to accept that familiar tipoff that we shall be hearing no more about the latest crime—the announcement that Mr. Roselli's dispatch to an oil drum and Beyond had "all the earmarks of a gangland slaying." These are the good old "earmarks" we only hear about when it is next to certain that we shall hear nothing more.

The supposition of course is that the Gang which runs gangland has its reasons and its methods and that, disagreeable as these may be, they really lie outside the proper realm of public concern because they

amount to a system of justice which 1) only affects those dumb enough to get involved in it in the first place and 2) tends only to punish those who have committed what the rest of us would regard as heinous crimes anyway. Not that these are things people say—they're things people can be expected to assume. But we think in this case the assumptions have even less validity than they would have on a clear day, which isn't much. And that is because if we know anything, we know that the Mafia operations in which Messrs. Giancana and Roselli figured had become intertwined with the operations of the United States government. Never mind that the decisions of the early 1960s which made this so may rank among the most abominable decisions ever taken in the U.S. government. The plain fact is that, given the provocative and suggestive history of the two men, it is not possible for either Congress or the Executive Branch to look the other way or to complacently accept the earmarks-of-a-gangland-slaying bromide.

After Mr. Giancana was killed, the Church Committee inquired of the FBI whether its proposed meeting with him had figured in his murder. The FBI reported that it had no evidence to this effect. The then-director of the CIA, William Colby, felt obliged to state that the CIA had had nothing to do with the murder—and Mr. Colby likewise pronounced the other day that he was certain the CIA had not done in Mr. Roselli. The mere fact that the questions, to which these were meant to be the answers, had been raised tells us, anyway, that much more in the way of inquiry is wanted. The newly formed Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has now asked the Justice Department to make an investigation of Mr. Roselli's death. We think the Department should comply and that the investigation, despite FBI Director Clarence Kelley's disclaimer of jurisdiction, should have the Attorney General's personal attention. Such attention is needed because of the elaborate and not entirely reassuring history of relationships between the FBI and the CIA and the various participants in the whole sorry saga. We are not suggesting that any agency of government—or even any of those agency's fringe retainers—were the murderers. We are suggesting that there is an overlay of potentially embarrassing information sufficiently pervasive to keep an awful lot of people from wanting to have this thing aired. We also think that the Select Committee should reserve the right to pursue the matter. Congress, after all, can hardly be expected to sit idly by while its witnesses are being done in. Nor do we see how the public in general and the political establishment in particular can turn their attention away until we are all satisfied that a much greater effort has been made by the government—which means both the Executive Branch and the Congress—to discover what elements were at play in this series of appalling crimes and scandals.