

Levi Orders F.B.I. To Start Inquiry On Roselli Murder

NY Times August 13, 1976

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Aug. 13—Attorney General Edward H. Levi today ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation to try to determine whether John Roselli, the crime figure, was murdered as a result of his Senate committee testimony on assassination plots of the Central Intelligence Agency against Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Mr. Levi was responding to requests from Senate Intelligence Committee members that the Justice Department take charge of the investigation.

A Justice Department spokesman, Robert Havel, said that Mr. Levi told the bureau "to investigate whether the Roselli homicide was the result of his testimony before the committee or to prevent future testimony before a committee of Congress."

Mr. Roselli's body was found last weekend in an oil drum floating in Biscayne Bay off the Florida coast.

Mr. Roselli had testified about his role in a C.I.A. plan to use organized crime figures

Continued on Page 22, Column 6

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

to kill Mr. Castro. The plan was never carried out.

Mr. Havel said Mr. Levi had authorized the bureau to enter the case under a Federal statute that makes it a crime to obstruct proceedings before Government agencies and Congressional committees. The statute sets a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

The bureau director, Clarence M. Kelley, said Wednesday that department officials had advised him that there was no Federal jurisdiction in the case. Murder is not usually a Federal crime.

But Mr. Havel said Mr. Levi had now decided that there was a basis for entering the case. Mr. Levi reached the decision after "communicating with the people up on the Capitol Hill to determine what Roselli had told the committee," Mr. Havel said. He did not elaborate.

The Federal investigation, Mr. Havel continued, "is to be undertaken with close cooperation and coordination with the authorities" in Dade County, Fla., which has jurisdiction over the Biscayne Bay area.

In his instructions to the bureau, Mr. Levi emphasized "that Dade County has the principal responsibility for the investigation," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, a lawyer for Mr. Roselli today discounted the possibility of a connection between his client's death and reported recent meetings between his client and West Coast crime figures.

Mr. Roselli at one time was known as the West Coast lieutenant of the Chicago mobster Sam Giancana, who was also involved in the C.I.A. assassination plots against Mr. Castro.

Mr. Giancana was murdered in June 1975, shortly before he was to testify before the Senate investigators.

Most Foul

Giancana was fixing a late night snack when somebody put seven .22 caliber bullets in his back. John Roselli was on his way to play golf when somebody interrupted his journey to asphyxiate him by stuffing his chained body into an oil drum and dumping the drum into the bay somewhere off southern Florida.

Messrs. Giancana and Roselli had a great deal in common in addition to being victims of unsolved murders. They were associates in organized crime. They were also associated during the early sixties in an enterprise spawned by the Central Intelligence Agency to murder Fidel Castro. At about the same time, they were also associated with a young woman named Judith Campbell, who in turn was associated with President John F. Kennedy.

Mr. Giancana was murdered a few days before he was scheduled to give testimony to the Church committee which was investigating intelligence agency abuses. Mr. Roselli testified twice before he was killed. Police authorities responded similarly to both murders. They suggested that each murder had "the earmarks" of a gangland killing. That official diagnosis generally provides people with a satisfactory explanation enabling them to file and forget any murder.

There are at best two things wrong with that attitude. The first is that there is no reason why gangland murders should be exempt from the ordinary processes of the law. A murderer should not enjoy immunity just because his victim spent a life in the rackets. Second, the connections are just too thick for these murders to be dismissed so lightly. Senator Howard Baker was right to perceive a strong need for further investigation of these crimes.

So far, the F.B.I. has found no jurisdiction to enable it to enter the cases, and the C.I.A. would seem to have even slimmer ground to pursue domestic murders. But, the Congress is not foreclosed, and jurisdiction would seem clear in a matter that may involve foreign policy, a President's life, intelligence abuses and obstruction of Congressional investigations—in addition to the fact that murders have been committed. Incantation of the familiar words, "gangland-style killing," should block neither people's minds nor further inquiries.