

The Heat Comes on The Mafia

By John J. Goldman
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NEW YORK—When some top Mafia members leave home first thing these mornings they are greeted at the doorstep by a quartet of New York City detectives. Down the block, plain for all to see, a uniformed policeman busily writes down the license plate numbers of all cars parked near the hoodlums' homes.

At lunchtime, the detectives may follow their targets into a restaurant and sit down at the next table. Sometimes they take a picture of their quarry.

It's clearly a war of nerves. The tactics aren't subtle, and they're not meant to be. They were born in outrage, out of the killings of two innocent businessmen during warfare between rival gang factions at a restaurant on Manhattan's residential Upper East Side.

In all, 18 mobsters have been slain in gang rivalry here since April. But the mistaken killings by a hired assassin, at a restaurant with the alliterative name of the Neapolitan Noodle, shattered a myth common to many New Yorkers and some policemen—that hoodlums only shoot each other.

Out of the gunfire have come pledges by Mayor John V. Lindsay and Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy for an all-out war to run this city's five mob families out of town. But behind the denunciations, the police and city officials admit it's going to be a difficult task.

"You can't drag them out

of their houses and take them to the city line," moaned one intelligence specialist who has spent almost a lifetime studying the mob.

Instead, plans are being laid for a long, calculated campaign of escalating economic and social pressure. How well America's largest city succeeds could serve as a model for similar efforts in other communities.

"They're not lovable figures by any means," said Murphy of New York's 3,000 organized crime figures. "So many of them are people who don't have the excuse of being very deprived. They turn to crime in a very cold, calculating way.

"When you look at records of people who moved into the mob, these are cruel, calculating individuals, and they don't all have Italian names. They're bad people. They corrupt policemen. They corrupt district attorneys. They corrupt judges."

Basically, the struggle between the Mafia factions of the Joseph Colombo and the late Joseph (Crazy Joe) Gallo that resulted in innocent deaths is rooted in economics.

Federal authorities believe an important meeting to determine whether the Colombo family (estimated at 150 members) should turn to narcotics to increase sagging revenues was in progress at the Neapolitan Noodle when the gunman struck.

The assassin killed two businessmen and wounded two others who had taken a place at the bar held moments earlier by four Colombo lieutenants.

Because of its fight with the Gallo faction, the Colombo Family has fallen on hard times. Members have been forced to neglect their rackets and turn to self-protection. In addition, there has been continuing pressure from federal authorities. Thus, the discussion of turning in a large way to narcotics traffic—where risks are high, but so are profits.