

The Roselli Story



SFChronicle

SEP 7 1976

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MAFIA MOBSTER John Roselli may have taken the secret of the John F. Kennedy assassination with him to his death. Before he died, Roselli hinted to associates that he knew who had arranged President Kennedy's murder. It was the same conspirators, he suggested, whom he had recruited earlier to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

By Roselli's cryptic account, Castro learned the identity of the underworld contacts in Havana who had been trying to knock him off. He believed, not altogether without basis, that President Kennedy was behind the plot.

The Cuban leader, as the supreme irony, decided to turn the tables and use the same crowd to arrange Kennedy's assassination, according to Roselli's scenario.

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ROSELLI COULD never be pinned down on names or details. Certainly there is no real evidence to support Roselli's story. But there are enough curious circumstances to justify telling it. Here are the fascinating highlights.

Roselli, a flamboyant mobster with underworld contacts in Havana, was recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1960 to assassinate Castro. He had no authority, however, over the underworld elements in Havana.

They were under the loose control of Florida's Mafia chieftain, Santos Trafficante. His gambling enterprises in Havana had been closed down by Castro after the 1959 revolution.

After Trafficante made it back to his Florida haunts, he left part of his organization behind in Havana. Some of his henchmen even managed to develop contacts in Castro's inner circle. These were the people Roselli wanted to use to knock off Castro.

But Roselli didn't have the stature inside the Mafia to make the necessary arrangements with Trafficante. So Roselli called in Sam (Momo) Giancana to deal with Trafficante.

Once Giancana and Trafficante set it up, Roselli used the Havana underworld to plot Castro's demise. Word reached Roselli that some of the plotters had been tortured and that Castro had learned about the whole operation.

The CIA called off the Roselli operation in March, 1963.

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IN AN INTERVIEW Castro indicated that he knew about the attempts on his life and warned that U.S. leaders also might not be safe.

According to Roselli, Castro enlisted the same underworld elements whom he had caught plotting against him. They supposedly were Cubans from the old Trafficante organization. Working with Cuban intelligence, they allegedly lined up an ex-Marine sharpshooter named Lee Harvey Oswald.

According to Roselli's version, Oswald may have shot Kennedy or may have acted as a decoy while others ambushed him from closer range.