

ROSELLI DESCRIBES ROLE IN C.I.A. PLOT

C.I.A. (D)

Mafia Figure Is Said to Tell
Panel He Was Recruited
for Castro Operation

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WASHINGTON, June 24—

John Roselli, a former member of the Al Capone gang and an operative of the Mafia for most of his adult life, told a Senate committee today that he had been recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency in a plot to kill Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba, according to members of the committee.

Mr. Roselli, a tanned, stocky 69-year-old man, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence under heavy guard in a closed session for some two hours. According to the committee chairman, Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, Mr. Roselli's testimony "filled in, in much greater detail, [the plot] and did not depart from what has been published in the press."

Earlier Mr. Church had said that the committee had evidence that the C.I.A. was involved in assassination plots and assassination attempts. Senator John G. Tower, Repub-

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lican of Texas, who is the committee vice chairman, said that Mr. Roselli had provided "details of contacts that were made," adding, "It doesn't throw any new light on the situation as I see it." He said that as a result of Mr. Roselli's testimony and other evidence, the premise that the C.I.A. used the Mafia to try to kill Premier Castro "is pretty well laid on the record."

Maheu Termed Recruiter

According to published reports, Mr. Roselli was recruited in late 1960 by Robert A. Maheu, acting on behalf of the C.I.A., in a plot to kill Mr. Castro, Mr. Maheu, according to authoritative sources, also recruited Sam Giancana, a Chicago rackets boss, in what was essentially plan to poison the three top leaders of the Cuban Government and create a power vacuum in the new revolutionary state.

Mr. Giancana was shot to death last Thursday in his Oak Park, Ill., home. His killers have not been apprehended. The Chicago police have described the killing as a premeditated "execution." Senator Church said that the committee had planned to call Mr. Giancana as a witness.

Photographs of Mr. Roselli have not been published for several years and many of the newsmen did not know what he looked like. According to Mr. Scherr, a practice attempt was made to mislead newsmen as to who Mr. Roselli was. Mr. Scherr said he did not believe any news agency had been successful in photographing Mr. Roselli and that he would "urge any organization not to use the picture if they had it."

Senator Church said that the committee had agreed to help Mr. Roselli in avoiding the press. He said that the committee had permitted Mr. Roselli to name only C.I.A. officials with whom he dealt and not to name private parties. Mr. Roselli was concerned about the safety of private parties if their names became known, Mr. Church said.

Mr. Roselli was dressed in a well-tailored black suit, tailored shirt with cufflinks and conservative tie. He answered the committee's questions calmly, one member said, and appeared to be like "anybody's grandfather."

Mr. Roselli gave his testimony in "layman's terms" and used little gangland slang, the member said. Mr. Roselli was reportedly serious but occasionally displayed a wry sense of humor. When one committee member asked him how he could quickly identify a particular agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the witness rejoined, "because he followed me for three years. He was in charge of my case."

Career Began in 1930's

Mr. Roselli's criminal career began in the nineteen-thirties when he was arrested 16 times on charges of carrying a gun while in the gang controlled by Al Capone. He served in the Army from 1942 to 1945, and received an undesirable discharge.

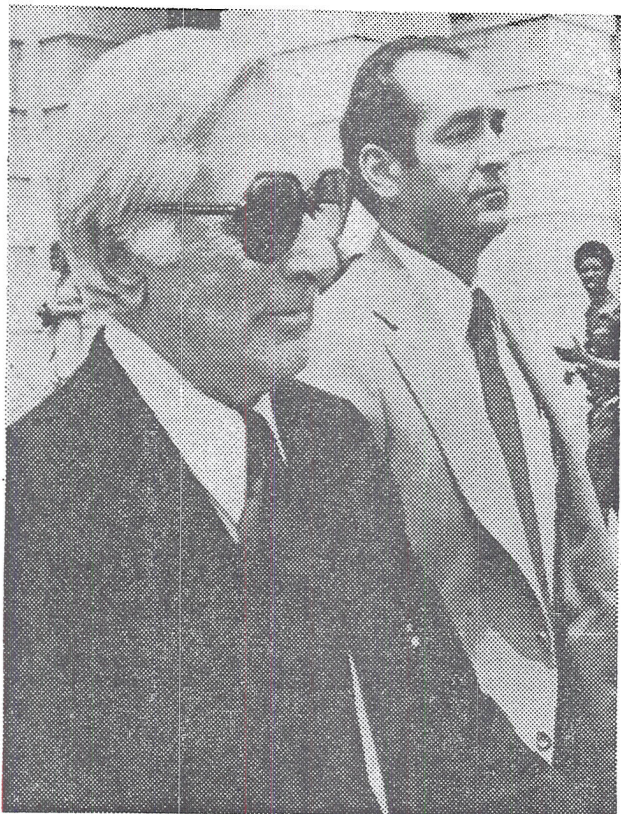
It was while in the service that Mr. Roselli was convicted of a scheme to extort money from Hollywood figures that stemmed from activities before the war. He was not convicted again until 1969 when he was sentenced to five years in Prison for a card cheating scandal at the Friars Club in Los Angeles.

The Government, at that time, began efforts to deport Mr. Roselli to Italy, where he was born in 1905. The case is being appealed. Mr. Roselli is also suing to have his discharge changed from undesirable to honorable.

In the next two days the committee is expected to hear testimony from Mr. Maheu and C.I.A. officials familiar with the plot.

Meanwhile the committee's controversy with the White House over the handling of evidence continued. The committee, Mr. Church said, was still not received National Security Council files from the early nineteen sixties that would help establish the chain of command on various alleged assassination plots.

As a result, he said, the committee may not be able to hear testimony this week from such former top officials of President Kennedy's Administration as Robert S. McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Gen. Maxwell B. Taylor and Walt W. Rostow.



The New York Times/George Tames

A man identified as John Roselli leaving the Capitol

SEE STORY *

Mr. Giancana's death left Mr. Roselli as the only organized crime figure who is known to have been connected with the plot. Leslie Scherr, one of the two lawyers who accompanied Mr. Roselli to the hearing, said later that Mr. Giancana's death had not caused Mr. Roselli to fear for himself, but for members of his family.

Another source said that Mr. Roselli was concerned about possible retaliation from Cuban nationalist groups rather than fearing an attack from organized crime elements.

Tight Security For Witness

Whatever his fears, Mr. Roselli came before the committee under extraordinary security precautions. He was taken to and from the committee room by backstairs and elevators under the guard of the Capitol police. Photographers took pictures of several men who appeared to be Mr. Roselli.