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Capitol  
Punishment

CIA(D)

# Giancana, Patriot

By Art Buchwald

Sam Giancana, a reputed Chicago crime syndicate leader, died quietly in his sleep last week, after being shot once in the mouth and five times in the neck.

While Giancana was better known for his contributions to the rackets, he was first and foremost an American patriot who served his country in its darkest hour.

CIA officials were stunned when they heard the news. At the Cloak and Dagger Bar and Grill in McLean, Va., Sam's friends sat quietly talking about him.

"Sam was one of us," an agency man said tearfully. "It's as though we've lost a godfather."

Another CIA man was so broken up he could hardly speak.

"I remember recruiting Sam in 1960. He was just a fresh young kid out of the Mafia, and when I asked him if he wanted to work for us his eyes lit up. He said, 'It's like a dream come true.'"

"Why did you ask Sam to work for you?" I asked the CIA man.

"Well, Sam had a lot of casinos in Havana and Castro took them away from him. So when we decided to knock off Castro we wanted to give the job to someone who felt strongly about anti-communism. I recall saying to him, 'If you kill Castro we'll see that you get your casinos back.' And you know what he said? He said, 'I don't care if I get the casinos back or not. I just want to help my country.'"

"That was just like Sam," another CIA man said as he wiped his eye with a handkerchief.

"So Sam agreed to work for you?" I asked.

The CIA man wept for several minutes and then got control of himself. "Of course he did. He never thought of the danger; he never thought of the expense. He knew as a Mafioso it was his duty to assassinate anyone his country asked him to."

A third CIA man picked up the story. "The funny thing about Sam was that to look at him you would never think he was CIA material. He was short and bald and liked to be seen with pretty girls.

"As a matter of fact, when we proposed Giancana for the contract there were several people in the agency who had doubts that he was the man for the job. But when we showed them Sam's hit record they were impressed."

"The thing about Sam," the first CIA man said, "is no matter what we asked of him, he never demanded anything in return. Oh, once in a while he'd ask us to have the Justice Department drop a federal indictment against him; or he might ask us to tell the FBI to lay off him. But outside of that he considered it an honor to serve his country."

The second CIA man said, "Sam had a great imagination. He did not want to shoot Castro. He wanted to poison him. He and Johnny Roselli had it all worked out to put poison in Castro's cigars."

"What went wrong?" I asked.

"Well, we were worried that Castro might offer the cigars to somebody else, like Jane Fonda or Muhammad Ali, so we didn't want to take a chance."

"Then there was talk of poisoning Castro's food. Finally, it was decided it would be better to just bump him off."

"But Sam failed to do it," I pointed out.

"It wasn't his fault," one of the CIA men said defensively. "Sam never got the support from the top. Every time he came up with a plan they rejected it for one reason or another. It was heartbreaking to watch Sam come back from a meeting with the big boys and see the frustration and discouragement on his face. Several times he talked about quitting the CIA and going back to the rackets full time. But I always talked him out of it. I said, 'Sam, it's guys like you that are going to keep Latin America from going Communist.'"

"And now he's gone," said another CIA man. "What irony. A gangster like Castro still lives and a good guy like Sam Giancana is dead."

The other CIA man held up his glass. "The agency will never see the likes of him again."

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