

Murders Most Foul

Sam "Momo" Giancana was fixing a late night snack in his kitchen when somebody put seven .22 caliber bullets in him. John Roselli was on his way to play golf when somebody interrupted his journey to asphyxiate him, stuff his chained body into an oil drum and then dump 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.