

Police Study All Theories In Shooting of Colombo

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By WILLIAM E. FARRELL

The police said yesterday that they were "open to all theories" in the shooting of Joseph A. Colombo Sr., the reputed Mafia leader, who lay in a coma at Roosevelt Hospital maintaining a tenuous hold on life.

At a news conference in a crowded room at the 18th Precinct Station, 306 West 54th Street, Chief of Detectives Albert A. Seedman said that "nothing startling" had been unearthed thus far in the bizarre shooting at an Italian-American civil rights rally Monday.

The police, he said were still trying to find out about Jerome A. Johnson, a 24-year-old black man who was shot to death at the rally in Columbus Circle. The police say

Johnson was the man who fired three bullets into Colombo.

The shootings occurred about 45 minutes before the start of a Unity Day rally sponsored by the Italian-American Civil Rights League in a barricaded area of Columbus Circle that was under heavy police security.

The league, which Colombo founded, yesterday informed its 32 chapters in the metropolitan area that the shooting of Colombo was the work of "one nut, one fanatic," and that "the black community should not be held responsible."

At his news conference, Chief Seedman said that "we know for certain that it was he [Johnson] who shot Colombo

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AT HOSPITAL: Anthony Colombo, son of wounded man, at Roosevelt Hospital, where his father was in a coma.

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and no one else."

Chief Seedman said that a 7.65-millimeter automatic pistol of foreign manufacture was taken from Johnson's body at the scene and that it was the one fired at Colombo.

Three other pistols were seized by the police after the melee, including a .38-caliber Colt Cobra and a .38-caliber Arminus, neither of which had been fired, police sources re-

ported.

The fourth weapon, a .38-caliber nickel-plated Smith & Wesson revolver, had been fired and was said to be the weapon used to kill Johnson, although police still do not know who shot him.

Dr. Milton Helpert, the city's chief medical examiner, said that Johnson had been shot four times — three times in the upper body and once in the arm.

The autopsy, he said, showed that the bullets had penetrated Johnson's heart and lungs and that he had died instantly.

Police Deny Responsibility

Asked if an associate of Colombo's had shot Johnson, Chief Seedman replied: "I really couldn't say. It was not a police officer." The chief went on to say that the area where the shooting occurred was primarily occupied by members of the civil rights league, which Colombo founded, and by newsmen.

Chief Seedman said that the gun fired upon Colombo had "no history" and had probably been smuggled into the country. The Smith & Wesson revolver, he said, had been traced to several owners, but "I will not reveal the last owner's name."

The chief would say only that the last owner possessed the weapon legally and was not a resident of New York City.

Chief Seedman was asked about various possibilities concerning Johnson—that he was "a nut" acting alone, that he was a black revolutionist acting with accomplices or that he was contracted by underworld enemies of Colombo to "hit" him.

"We're open to all theories at this time," the chief said. "One's as good as another at this point."

"It's very possible Johnson did this on his own," the chief said, adding that the police had nothing substantial as yet to connect Johnson with the underworld or with black revolutionists.

He said a call made to The Associated Press after the shootings by a group identified as the Black Revolutionary Attack Force claiming to have initiated the attack on Colombo was probably a crack call.

"We're trying to locate people with whom [Johnson] associated while in New York City," the chief said. Several persons who knew Johnson talked with reporters yesterday and what emerged was a strange picture of a young man who had two pictures of Hitler in his possession and who was to have held a woman captive for weeks and brutalized her.

Based on accounts of the shootings by persons present at the scene, the chief said that the police were also looking for a black woman who may have been an accomplice of Johnson's.

Accounts of Witnesses Differ

But here again the accounts were sketchy. The chief said that the woman was described as being in her early 20's, having an Afro hairdo, and, depending on which account you listened to, was dressed in a black pants suit or in a printed dress or coat.

"She was never seen actually in Johnson's company," the chief added.

Johnson had gained access to the stage area of the rally, the chief said, by posing as a photographer and presenting a worn blue New Jersey press card to Unity Day officials to

obtain a special tricolor press pass the league was issuing newsmen.

This version was disputed by Tom Nastro, who handled press relations for the rally. Mr. Nastro acknowledged that Johnson had shown him a worn blue New Jersey working press pass and was admitted to the stage area, but that "he did not have one of our tricolor passes, because I was completely out of them."

Mr. Nastro also said that Johnson had told him he had two associates—a male and a female—who wanted admittance, and "I said if they had proper credentials I would" admit them.

He added that he had no further talks with Johnson and did not meet the two associates.

Chief Seedman said that a camera case picked up by the police at the scene had led to a check with a Boston camera concern that showed that Johnson had rented a movie camera on June 23, and "he used it at the rally."

The camera was not recovered, the chief said, declining to give the name of the Boston concern. Asked whether film taken from television crews at the scene of the shootings showed the incidents in detail, the chief said:

"I'd rather not talk about the film."

Earlier in the day, Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy said that he did not know of any photographic evidence showing Johnson shooting Colombo.

During the day, Mrs. Ethel Johnson, of New Brunswick, N. J., who identified her son's body, was questioned at the 18th Precinct station but, according to Chief Seedman, she was "not much help."

Relatives Continue Vigil

The police continued to sift through the theories, tips and bits of evidence in the case, such as what significance if any to attach to a soiled woman's white glove picked up at the scene. Meanwhile, Colombo's family continued a vigil at Roosevelt Hospital as the man, reputed by Federal law officials to be a Brooklyn Mafia chief, fought for his life.

A statement late yesterday afternoon by Dr. Ervin Hanson, neuro-surgeon, and Dr. Richard L. Keenan, chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology, said that Colombo had received eight pints of blood since Monday night and that his "vital signs" were "somewhat stronger."

Although still in a coma, "there is spontaneous movement on the left side of the body," the statement said adding that the next 48 to 72 hours were "critical."

The 48-year-old Colombo's chances were regarded as 50-50. If he recovers, there is a strong chance that he will suffer brain damage.

Early in the evening, a prayer vigil for Colombo began for the second night outside the hospital.

One of Colombo's sons, Joseph Jr., left the hospital to inspect the vigil areas, where a five-foot symbol of the league had been fashioned out of carnations. The symbol is a green map of the United States, outlined in white and red, the three colors of the Italian flag.