

COLOMBO ATTACK LINKED BY POLICE TO A GANG PLOT

Shooting Said to Be a Part
of the Italian-American
Underworld Rivalry

JUL 3 1971

RENTED CAMERA FOUND

Jerome Johnson and 2d Man
Were Reportedly Hired
as 'Hit Men' in Case

—NYTimes—

By FRED FERRETTI

The near-fatal shooting of Joseph A. Colombo Sr. on Monday was an underworld plot, "part of a struggle for pre-eminence among certain segments of the Italian-American community," a police spokesman said yesterday.

Those involved in the plot, which according to the spokesman, Deputy Police Commissioner Robert Daley, was "detailed," organized and planned with care, and "approved only days before" the shooting, will be arrested, he said. But Mr. Daley could not say when.

"Rivals of Colombo" in the "Italian underworld community" hired Jerome A. Johnson to kill the reputed organized-crime leader, Mr. Daley said, and then reportedly ordered Johnson's execution to silence him.

Mr. Daley said the police had determined that there were "two hit men, Johnson and the man who hit Johnson."

Camera as Evidence

Commissioner Daley's assertions followed his exhibition of a 16-mm. Bolex movie camera that he said had been rented by Johnson two days before the shooting. He said it was a "key" piece of evidence in the investigation and "had been traced to Boston at noon" yesterday. He declined to comment on its significance.

He said further that Colombo had not been the only intended victim.

"They did not intend to stop with Colombo," Mr. Daley said, but he asserted that the police had uncovered the plot and, hopefully, had averted other assaults.

"There's only been one shooting so far and we'd like to keep it that way," Mr. Daley said.

Colombo Improving

Colombo was shot three

times in the head as he stood in Columbus Circle on Monday awaiting the beginning of the second annual Italian-American Civil Rights League's Unity Day rally. Colombo, the founder of the league, was still in critical condition but showed signs of improvement yesterday.

Seconds after Colombo was shot, Johnson was fatally shot. The bullets found in Colombo came from a 7.65 mm. automatic pistol that the police say was taken from Johnson's body. Johnson was killed with a bullet from a .38-caliber Smith & Wesson revolver, reportedly a stolen weapon. However, the police are still not

Continued on Page 42, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

saying who killed Johnson.

League officials, including Colombo's oldest son, Anthony, 26 years old, contend that he was shot by a "nut, a fanatic."

Mr. Daley's assertions yesterday indicated the police believed Johnson either had an accomplice or was double-crossed by the plotters.

The break in the investigation of the shootings came "within the space of a couple of hours" yesterday, Mr. Daley said, but he declined to be specific.

He was asked if the resoluteness with which he spoke was based on arrests, on informants' statements or on physical evidence, and he answered, "I can't say."

Asked if the police knew who was reportedly involved in the anti-Colombo plot, Mr. Daley said, "Yes."

He was asked their names and replied, "I can't say."

Questioned After Shooting

On Monday after the shooting, Carlo Gambino, a reported overboss of Colombo's, was questioned by the police at the West 54th Street Precinct station, as was Joseph Gallo, reportedly Colombo's rival for control of organized crime in Brooklyn, and his brother, Albert Gallo, also a reported underworld figure.

Was Mr. Daley speaking of either Gambino or the Gallos, he was asked. "I can't say," he said.

It is known that late last week informants told police authorities in Brooklyn that Gallo was not supporting the Italian-American Civil Rights League Unity Day Effort, and that there was a possibility of trouble. The police have suggested that Gambino was unhappy over the masses of publicity gained by Colombo since formation of the league one year ago.

Mr. Daley, when asked if Colombo was "in disfavor in the underworld," answered, "Obviously."

Did this struggle between the Colombo faction and his unnamed rival here have the "approval" of the "underworld bosses?"

"Obviously," Mr. Daley said.

Mr. Daley said that there were to have been other victims after Colombo, "but I can't say who."

Did the police know who the intended victims were?

"Yes."

How many were there?

"Several."

He was asked specifically if "this was a war of the Mafia?" and he replied: "War is too strong. But it is a struggle for power among the underworld."

Mr. Daley said last night

that a report that four close associates of Colombo—Jiggs Forlano, Carmine Persico, Hugh McIntosh and Joseph Iannuci—were also marked for assassination was "absolutely pure drivel."

He also said that a report that Johnson had been promised \$200,000 and a trip out of the country for shooting Colombo was "drivel." Johnson was promised a sum of money because he was a hired gun, Mr. Daley said, but as for the amount, "I can't say."

The Commissioner was asked if the police thought the assault on Colombo before thousands of people in Columbus Circle wasn't "outlandish."

He answered, "If Colombo had died, you wouldn't think it was outlandish."

He was asked if any members of the Colombo underworld "family" were suspects. He said, "I can't answer that."

Eyes Reported Tested

Colombo, meanwhile, remained in Roosevelt Hospital, where, according to a spokesman for the Italian-American Civil Rights League, doctors had tested his eyes. They found no damage had been done to them, the spokesman said.

There had been speculation that his assailant—Johnson—had been linked to Colombo, or to the league. Johnson had told a relative that he was working as a photographer for the league, but the league has denied this.

Yesterday, Mr. Daley was asked if Johnson had been an employe of the league.

"I don't think you can say that," he said.

Did he have entrée to the league?

"I can't say," he said.

Johnson's telephone number, when called, is transferred to the league number.

A relative of Johnson's says that he called the league after the shooting on Monday and was told that Johnson was out working with the rest of the staff.

Tom Nestro, public relations director for the league, said again yesterday that Johnson had not worked for his organization.

At a news conference at Police Headquarters, Mr. Daley prefaced his assertions by pulling the camera that he said Johnson had rented out of a paper bag, and saying:

"This is Johnson's camera. It came to light at noon today. We've traced it to Boston."

Did it contain film? he was asked.

"I can't answer that," he said.

Where did the police find it?

"I can't say."

Where was it, and who had it?

"I can't say."

Was it given to the police by someone, or did they find it?

"I can't say. All I can say

it was rented in Boston two days before the shooting with a rubber check."

Earlier, the police said Johnson's possessions taken from his last address at 176 Elizabeth Street included several blank checks bearing the words Bark Book Distributors, Inc.

The company, according to the State Investigation Commission, specialized in pornography. It is partly owned by Joseph Brocchini, a reputed underworld figure.

Yesterday, Robert Cahn, an attorney for the other co-owner of the book company, Robert Barkow, said that a quantity of checks of the company had been stolen this year, and that he had given the police the name of a woman who had reportedly offered them for sale.

Mr. Cahn said the woman was a model who had worked in another enterprise partially owned by Mr. Barkow, the Club Orgy. After the theft of the checks was discovered, his client switched accounts, Mr. Cahn added.

He said he assumed that the checks found in Johnson's possession were those from the stolen batch.

Mr. Cahn said the police questioned the woman yesterday afternoon.

Commissioner Daley said in an interview later that the police still had not found a link between Johnson and Colombo.

Mr. Daley said also that there existed no evidence that Johnson had ever been used prior to last Monday as a "hit man" or hired killer. However, he added:

"We know a good deal more than I'm allowed to tell you."

Confusion on Number

Richard Garvin, the director at Rutgers University, and Johnson's cousin, said Johnson had given him the telephone number of the Italian-American Civil Rights League, according to Johnson. It was 242-8938.

According to the New York Telephone Company, that number was assigned to the Walker & Williams Exterminating Company in Manhattan.

The manager of the building, however, said there never had been an exterminating company there. Johnson was reported to have lived there for several months this year.

On April 28, he called the telephone company, had his calls transferred to an answering service and then did the same thing several days later. Sometime between June 15 and June 25 a request was made to transfer calls for the number 242-8938 to 486-9415, the number of the Italian-American Civil Rights League at 635 Madison Avenue.

Johnson reportedly told his cousin that he expected his photography job with the league to give him an introduction to the motion-picture business.