

Colombo's Son Condemns Police View of Shooting

By FRED FERRETTI

The Police Department was bitterly attacked by Anthony Colombo yesterday for "going the scapegoat route" in asserting that the shooting of his father erupted out of a power struggle within the Mafia.

"They don't have enough information to go before a grand jury, but they have enough to go before the public," he said in an interview at Roosevelt Hospital where his father is still in a coma from bullet wounds in his head.

"It's the easy way to investigate," he said. "Why not use the fiction that everybody believes anyway? Why not the mythical Mafia? Why not all the Italians who have been labeled already?"

Mr. Colombo, 26, years old, is the oldest son of Joseph A. Colombo, who was shot three times in the head by Jerome A. Johnson on June 28, just before the start of a Unity Day rally sponsored by the Italian-American Civil Rights League. The son is vice president of the league.

The father has been identified by Federal authorities as leader of a Mafia "family" here.

The son said yesterday that he referred to the two news conferences called since the shooting at which the police disclosed what they called aspects of an "organized plot" in which Joseph Colombo was to



The New York Times
Anthony Colombo during
an interview at Roosevelt
Hospital yesterday.

have been killed for hire by Johnson, and under which Johnson was then to be eliminated.

The police said further that others were to have been killed as part of the plot to cut off underworld rivalries.

In addition, the second of these police reports, held Monday at Police Headquarters, Chief of Detectives Albert A. Seedman linked Johnson—who was killed immediately after he shot Colombo—to a man he said was a "soldier" in the underworld family of Carlo Gambino.

Mr. Colombo said the police assertions were "totally ridiculous."

He was asked if friction or enmity had existed between his stricken father and either Gambino or Joseph Gallo, who have been called underworld figures by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Colombo replied, "I don't think so."

Daley's Suggestion

Deputy Police Commissioner Robert Daley initially suggested that Colombo's assassination might have been ordered by Gambino because he was unhappy about the publicity Colombo was gathering as founder of the League. On the day of the shooting, both Gallo and Gambino were brought in for questioning.

The younger Colombo said of Gallo, "I don't even know the man," and of the speculation about Gambino, "He is the godfather of my six-year-old sister, Catherine. I don't have to say any more than that." to say any more than that."

He said he believed that Johnson was a "deranged psychopath, the same kind that killed John Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy."

"My father was the head of the league," Mr. Colombo said. "He was a possible political leader. He was open to assassination. Was the killer hired? He could have been. But by who?"

The Rev. Louis Gigante, a Roman Catholic priest from the South Bronx who is chaplain of the rights league, was with the young Mr. Colombo yesterday at the hospital, and he picked up the thread.

"If he was hired. The C.I.A. has done this before. The F.B.I. has done this before. Maybe he was hired by so-called legitimate forces."

'Shock Value'

Mr. Colombo broke in. "Maybe it was 'let's break up the league.' Look at the shock value of killing in front of a crowd. Whenever a movement is getting strong, whenever it is gaining momentum, its leader is struck down. Think about it."

He criticized the police for

calling news conferences to give out "unsubstantiated bits and pieces."

"Daley offers no proof," he declared. "Why don't they arrest somebody if they know it was this plot? All I hear is unsubstantiated gang wars and rivalries. Tell me where Johnson's camera came from. Where is this female accomplice they keep talking about?"

The police said they had traced a Bolex movie camera to a shop in Boston where Johnson rented it before the shooting. Yesterday Thomas Nestro, public-relations man for the league, said that when Johnson came to the rally site on the day of the shooting he had a "Nikon 35-mm camera with a 200-mm. lens. Where did the camera come from?"

At Monday's news conference Chief Seedman said that they had found a woman who was with Johnson before the shooting, but that they were not in a position to say she was with Johnson at the time of the shooting. It had been reported that a young black woman ran from the scene of the shooting.

'The Easy Way Out'

Mr. Colombo continued: "First they said Johnson was shot by a hit man. Now it's a bodyguard. They keep changing their minds. The cops take the easy way out. It's easy to say Italians are killing one another in power plays."

He was asked if the police had ever spoken with him. "No," he said.

Then he asked: "Wouldn't it have been proper for the police to say nothing until they have evidence, until they have something else but a lot of nonsense? No. It's typical, it's absurd."

Mr. Colombo also criticized Chief Seedman's linking of Johnson and organized crime. "It's a link when a man is a regular at a bottle club? Is this a connection? What if Johnson frequented the 18th Precinct, would they link him to the Police Commissioner?"

He was asked why he thought the police repeated their assertions of underworld plots.

"Because they need patsies," he replied. "Look at it this way. A black man shot my father. It could have developed into an issue; there could have been incidents. There have been none. Is that a good enough reason?"

He said, however, that his resentment and anger towards the police was directed only at 240 Centre Street. "The cops at the hospital here have been compassionate," he said. "At Unity Day they were wonderful."