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July 14, 1950

MEMORANDUM

Re: JAMES BALESTRERE, with aliases: James Baliastori, James Balastreri, James Balestrieri

James Balestrere resides at 5421 Brooklyn Street, Kansas City, Missouri. He was born at Bagheria, Sicily, on June 24, 1891, and was naturalized in the United States District Court, Kansas City, Missouri, on July 3, 1922, under Certificate of Naturalization No. 1721875.

It has been reported that prior to 1933 Balestrere operated the North Side Motors at 431 East Sixth Street, Kansas City, Missouri, and it is also reported that he was associated with Charles Binaggio in the Kansas City Syrup Company, which during prohibition days had as its most lucrative outlet the sale of sugar to be used for bootleg purposes. It has also been stated that following the repeal of prohibition in 1933 Balestrere became associated in the Glendale Beverage Company together with Charles Gargotta, Giovanni Battista Blando, Charles Carrollo, Anthony Gizzo, and Joe DiGiovanni. Of this group, it is alleged that DiGiovanni now heads the Midwest Distributing Company, a wholesale liquor concern; Blando is the head of Superior Wines and Liquors; and Gizzo operates the Duke Sales Company, a wholesale beer-distributing concern. It is also alleged that Balestrere has a financial interest in all of these concerns, as well as a number of taverns in Kansas City which serve as retail outlets for these concerns. Balestrere and his son, Samuel, are reported to operate the National Tobacco and Liquor Store, 1124 East 18th Street, Kansas City.

It was reported that at one time Balestrere owned the White House Tavern, located at 85th Street and Wornall Road just outside the city limits of Kansas City. The White House Tavern was alleged to have operated as a night spot and gambling casino until two years ago, when the city limits of Kansas City were extended to include this location. It has also been indicated that Balestrere was financially interested in a gambling establishment known as Green Hills, located in Platte County just across the Missouri River to the north of Kansas City.

It is reported that Balestrere banks at the City National Bank and Trust Company, Kansas City, and that he maintains a safe-deposit box at that institution.

No police record is known which is identifiable with Balestrere.

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MEMORANDUM

JAMES BALESTRERE

5421 Brooklyn Street

Subject was a former leader of the old North Side Democratic Club and one of the so-called iron men of Kansas City. The others being Tony Gizzo, Tano Lococo, Charles Gargotta and

Charles Binaggio. He has been known as the arbitrator for the Italian Mafia or Black Hand Society and is one of the most feared persons in the underworld. In 1943 when the faction comprising the North Side Democratic Club split, Balestrere went into semi-retirement and was seldom seen in the down town area. At the present time Balestrere and his superior, Joe Digiovanni, local head of the Black Hand, are believed to be the controlling factors in the faction labeled the Binaggio-Clark-McKissick group and known as the First District Democratic Club. He is a man of considerable wealth but he constantly complains of financial distress and states that he has very little income. It is common knowledge in the underworld that Tony Gizzo is his agent and that all interests and holdings purportedly owned by Gizzo are in realty Balestrere's.

He is alleged to have been very influential in Union activities in Kansas City for the past 15 years. It is said that he obtained a very high salaried job for Morris Solowisky, alias Morris Sol. The latter has previous convictions for violation of the Narcotics laws and murdered a man on the down town streets a number of years ago in what was later termed self-defense. Balestrere is purported to have brought Joe Arvin, a notorious Union organizer and terrorist, from Chicago, Illinois to Kansas City in order to organize a cleaners and dyers Union, and one of his sons now holds an influential and high salaried position as Secretary of the Local Retail Clerks Union.

Information was received from a confidential source that Balestrere muscled an interest in the Green Hills Gambling Club for himself and other Italians and is alleged to have forced his agent, Bobbie Carnahan upon Max Cohen, who formerly controlled bootlegging and other rackets at Wichita, Kansas.

JOHN M. McCORMICK