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Binaggio --

Charles Binaggio, slain Kansas City gang leader, was interesting himself in the deportation case of a notorious top-flight Italian gangster and leader in the Mafia who was once associated with Frank Costello of New York, so-called "prime minister of the underworld," in slot machine operations in Louisiana, the Post-Dispatch has learned.

The deportation case, one of the major ones in recent years, involved Frank Coppola, alias "Three-fingers Frank" Polo and Francisco Paola Cappola, who makes his headquarters now in a motel at 1012 Revolution street in Tijuana, Mexico, across the border from San Diego, Cal. Coppola is one of the top mean in the Unione Siciliano, Italian secret organization with members scattered throughout the world, commonly known as the Mafia.

The gangster is reported to still be receiving monthly checks derived from the slot machine racket in Louisiana with Costello recently admitted having been connected with. Coppola lives in Mexico on a visa granted by the Mexican government to "study agriculture and mining".

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"The Senate crime investigating committee, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, has been reported in Washington as turning its attention to the operations in the United States of the Sicilian Mafia. The name of Costello was connected with the Mafia in testimony in a narcotics case in New York four years ago. Costello denied the Mafia connection and asserted he "detested the narcotics racket and everyone connected with it."

Binaggio auded Coppola, who used the names of Polo and Frank Lomonde when he lived in St. Louis in the early 1930's, in his efforts to resist deportation and was on Coppola's \$2000, deportation bond before the hoodlum's last deportation case in May 1949.

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Senator Kefauver said this week that H. J. Anslinger, United States Narcotics Commissioner, had furnished the Senate committee with information about the Mafia and its operations.

"I can't discuss the testimony in detail," Kefauver related, "but Anslinger's testimony will be a big help in our drive against organized crime." He added that the Senate crime investigators are seeking information on the immigration and citizenship records of known and supported criminals and big-time gamblers in the search for links with the Mafia.

Last summer, after the August primary, when Binaggio was one of his [c]hief lieutenants, Morris (Snag) Klein, now serving a sentence in Leavenworth Prison for vote fraud, accompanied by their wives and driven by bodyguard-chauffeur Nick Penna, vacationed in the West, they visited Coppola at the motel where he lives in Tijuana. The Binaggio party continued on to Acapulco, Mexico, where Sylvester Carollo, another deported New Orleans and San Francisco hoodlum, makes his headquarters. Binaggio is reported to have purchased a home in Acapulco.

Attention was directed to Coppola and a group of Sicilians, most of them from Palermo, Sicily, living in the Tijuana Motel late last February 28 when Anthony (Tony) Lopiparo, St. Louis hoodlum, was arrested in the Cadillac sedan of Tory Giardano, another St. Louis gangster, near

the motel.

Lopiparo told Mexican police he was in the slot machine business in St. Louis — Anthony Novelty Co., 1528 Olive Street— and was in Mexico on business. Slot machines are not allowed in Mexico in the Tijuana area.

Lopiparo did not have the title to the automobile in his possession and he was forced to spend several nights in the local jail while ownership was being established through Missouri authorities. Mexican officers said Lopiparo wept with rage and disgust when he was locked up despite all of Coppola's efforts in his behalf.

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On orders of Tijuana Chief of Police Francisco Kraus, the motel was raided by officers under Detective Capt. Roberto Valle Miller and more than a dozen Italians taken into questioning for custody, including Coppola and Carollo. Capt. Miller found that a number of the were fresh arrivals from Sicily and that most of them had been arrested there on white slave charges, although no convictions showed against them.

Among those arrested were Carlo Scircitino, Antonio d'Acquisto, Vito Cusenza, James Corona, Giacomo Corona, Guido Morana, all of Palermo, Sebastian Gallo, formerly of Detroit but now living at Oceanside, Cal., and Frank Bompenseiro, tavern owner of San Diego and a business associate of Jack Dragna, known as the "Capone of Los Angeles."

The officers questioned the men regarding narcotics and smuggling across the border of "wetbacks," (Mexicans who cross illegally). The Border Patrol of the Immigration & Naturalization Service at Chula Vista was notified of the character of the men with Coppola and also investigated the group but no charges could be placed against them.

When Binaggio was murdered April 5, the small group of men scattered, Coppola flew to Mexico City, Carollo went to Acapulco, Morana and Scircitino were caught Apr. 5 at San Ysidro, Cal., crossing the border illegally, and are now detained at Camp Elliot near San Diego with other persons waiting deportation. The others, except Bompenseiro, left the area.

Despite his deportation, Coppola had hopes of getting back in the United States legally. He is quoted as having told friends he "would give my right arm" to return to the United States. Coppola donated funds to Binaggio for the Missouri political campaign in the hope he would be able to return.

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Lopiparo and Giardino were among a group of St. Louisans who donated heavily to the campaign in the hope that the "green light" would be flashed for gambling in

Missouri. The Post-Dispatch has learned that the hoodlums borrowed the money from a wealthy Italian merchant of St. Louis.

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Lopiparo owed Binaggio approximately \$2500 at the time of the slaying. While it is not known what the loan was for, it can be disclosed for the first time that it was to try and collect this money and hold it against possible income tax penalties that the Government authorities at Kansas City placed a lien against any Binaggio holdings in St. Louis last month.

Whether the \$2500 was a personal, loan or was the result of a business deal could not be learned. The Tony Giordano-Tony Lopiparo group, however, are known to have sat in on the notorious Hyde Park Club several weeks before Binaggio's murder. It was at this meeting that a number of gangsters stated "that damned Dago can't push us around." It was also at this meeting that the hoodlums discussed "how good things were going in New Orleans but that matters had gone south at Hot Springs." Apparently they were speaking of some of their illicit enterprises.

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Coppola was first deported in 1948 via Boston. The Immigration & Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice tried to keep Coppola from returning to this country on a temporary visa in 1949, but Coppola managed to obtain the visa through Binaggio and the help of his attorneys.

Agents of the Intelligence Unit of the Internal Revenue Department were not averse to Coppola's return to the United States on the temporary visa, for they wanted to attempt to collect \$8000 due the Government in connection with income tax evasions. The revenue agents did collect \$5000 of the \$8000 which was represented in the \$2000 bond that Binaggio had signed. The bond, whether it represented money put up by

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Coppola or Binaggio, was nevertheless in Binaggio's name, and it was turned over to the Government to partially satisfy the income tax claim.

When Coppola re-entered the United States on his temporary visa, he returned to Kansas City and lived at the Pickwick Hotel. He resumed his contacts with Binaggio and also his meetings with the St. Louis Giordano-Lopiparo group at Billy Rich's Jungle Club, rendezvous in Kansas City for the St. Louis-Kansas City gangs.

When Coppola was first arrested on a deportation warrant in 1947 in Kansas City, where he had fled from New Orleans, he retained Richard T. Shanahan of Kansas City as his attorney. Shanahan, a former FBI agent, arranged for Coppola to voluntarily leave the country and stay out for a year before making a new application to enter the United States, the Post-Dispatch learned.

Coppola became impatient after about six months and disregarded the lawyer's advice. He put his deportation case in the hands of A. B. Mitchell of Lawrence, Kan., formerly attorney general of the state, who also failed to effect his return to the United States.

A few weeks before Binaggio's murder, Coppola wrote mutual friends of his and Binaggio's in Kansas City and asked for the return of any of the papers in the hands of Shanahan, Mitchell and Binaggio, regarding Ms deportation case.

While writing in Italian, Coppola never failed to pass on his "regards to Charlie." In his last letters asking for return of his papers, Coppola asked that the papers be forwarded to the Hotel

Caesar in Tijuana, as he had engaged mother lawyer.

Watson B. Miller, commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, would not permit inspection of the files under a rule of the Department of Justice. The Kansas City office of the service also declined to permit inspection of the file.

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The Post-Dispatch learned, however, that in March Coppola engaged a prominent New York law firm to represent him. A former member of the law firm is now a

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top Government official in Washington, and while he does not have anything to do with importation cases, is in a position of power.

Gonzalo Obregon, Mexican Consul at Kansas City and a nephew Mexican resident Alvaro Obregon, could not find any record of issuing a visa for Coppola. Records in Mexico, however, show that Coppola is living in Mexico on a visa issued by the Mexican consul at Kansas City, while Carollo has a visa issued by the Mexican consul at San Francisco.

Coppola's record ranges from a homicide in 1919 in Palermo, Sicily, to bootlegging in the United States. Government reports indicate he came to the United States illegally from Cuba in 1926. The diminutive hoodlum— he is not quite five feet in height— engaged in the produced racket in Detroit, bootlegging in Los Angeles in the 1930's, and was sought for extortion for a number of years in kidnappings in Peoria and Rock Island, Ill. in 1933 when he was using the name of Angelo Vota.

As Frank Lomonde he was arrested in St. Louis County in connection with the murder of Deputy Constable George B. Adams on Natural Bridge road near Lindbergh boulevard on April 5, 1934. Arrested with him were Giardano, Vito Ventimiglia, owner of a farm on which a whiskey still was in operation, Frank (Jack LaManna, who died of peritonitis after he had been questioned in the killing, Peter Salvo, Joe Lupo, Angelo Lombardi, Sam Barbero, Joe Mocerri, and Ralph (Shorty Ralph) Calico, a chief lieutenant of the Giardano group. The murder was never solved.

Coppola was operating the Lincoln Park tavern near St. Peter's to St. Charles County at the time of the killing, and most of the arrests were made in his establishment. At the time Coppola gave his age as 28 and his home address as Kansas City, Mo.

Coppola went to New Orleans in 1943 and teamed up with Sylvester Carollo, a narcotics racketeer, and they bought an interest in a Morgan City oyster company. In 1944 Coppola bought an interest in the Louisiana Novelty Company at Baton Rouge.

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which distributed slot machines and pinball machines to 43 "stops".

When the Immigration authorities got after him in 1945 he sold the novelty company but bought it back in 1947. He maintained he made only a modest living from the company but agents of the Internal Revenue Department disputed this.

Coppola was associated with Costello, Phil (Dandy Phil) Kastel, operators of the Beverly Club in New Orleans, and with A. G. (Freddie) Rickerfor, big-time Louisiana gambler. Costello's name was linked with Coppola's novelty company at one time.

Kastel and Rickerfor are on record now as the owners of the Louisiana Mint Co., distributors of slot and pinball machines in New Orleans and throughout the state.. Kastel, a former New York gambler, has been one of Costello's chief lieutenants for many years. Costello has admitted his gambling operations in Louisiana but has minimized them.

Binaggio was a frequent visitor to New Orleans when Coppola was operating there. When on visits to St. Louis, both Coppola and Binaggio contacted the reported head, of the Mafia, a North St. Louis Italian who operates an undertaking company.

The St.Louis Italian, an associate of James Balestrere of Kansas City, reported Mafia head there, secured quarters for Italian gang leaders from the Mayfield gang of Cleveland, the Capone gang of Chicago, the Smaldone gang of Denver and the gang at Kansas City, at swank West End Hotels, when a relative of Pete Licavoli, Detroit gang leader and former St. Louisan, died here last March.

No records of the men having stayed in St. Louis were available, although the other cities repeated that the hoodlums had gone to St. Louis for a funeral. It was learned that the north St. Louis Italian got around this possibility by simply renting rooms or suites in his name and paying the bill himself.

Balestrere has been under investigation by the Federal grand jury at Kansas City for a number of months. He has appeared innumerable times before that body as a
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witness. While his name is known from coast to coast as avital power in the Mafia in the middle west, Balestrere insists to newspaper reporters that he is a "simple business man." He admits to having some minor gambling interests with Binaggio in the past.

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