



# The Five Weeks of Giuseppe Zangara: The Man Who Would Assassinate FDR

*Blaise Picchi*

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In Miami Florida, on February 15, 1933, Giuseppe Zangara, an unemployed New Jersey bricklayer from Italy, fired five pistol shots at the back of President-elect Franklin Roosevelt's head from only twenty-five feet away. While all five rounds missed their target, each bullet found a separate victim. One of these was Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago, who died of his wound some three weeks later. A scant two weeks after that, Zangara was executed in the electric chair. It was perhaps the swiftest legal execution in twentieth-century American history. With his death, Zangara took to the grave the answer to one of the most baffling unsolved mysteries in the annals of Presidential assassinations. Was FDR Zangara's real target? Or was he a mob hitman who actually intended to kill Cermak, as legendary columnist and FDR confidant Walter Winchell believed? Was he a terrorist, as the LA police contended? Could he have been a member of La Camorra, a Neapolitan crime society, as the prison warden insisted? Was he simply insane, as many at the time thought? Or was he really a martyr for the cause of the Common Man, as he himself proclaimed? These are some of the questions dealt with in this first-ever analysis of a fascinating true crime. This work is based not only on trial transcripts, police records, personal interviews and newspaper accounts, but on Zangara's own memoir, which had been lost in the prison warden's papers until it was unearthed by the author. This incredible saga is history in the round: it involves law, medicine and politics at the highest levels. The discovery, for example, that Cermak died not from his relatively simple wound, but as a result of malpractice, is but one of the fascinating aspects of this new history.

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