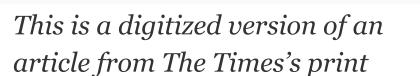
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No Excuse for Mr. Barr's Outrage OCT. 14, 1992





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Justice Department was handling

the case credibly. Its prosecution is

unraveling in a welter of confusion.

Mistakes of judgment were made

when the Bush Administration kept

trying to appease Saddam Hussein

long after Iraq's war with Iran had

ended. But crimes also were



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committed as the United States favored Iraq with loan guarantees ostensibly to pay for food. The money was diverted to military purposes and Government records were doctored to disguise the transactions. For two years the main Government case has been against Christopher Drogoul, the former Atlanta branch manager for the Rome-based Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. He stands virtually alone, accused of defrauding his

employers in Italy by secretly

Mr. Hussein's military.

lending Iraq billions of dollars,

That's like nailing second-rate

burglars for crimes of Watergate

much of which wound up helping

proportions. Mr. Drogoul is no innocent, but he refuses to take the rap alone. He has withdrawn his guilty plea and will stand trial -after the election. The charge that he defrauded his employers is almost certainly incomplete. The plea bargain was dissolved amid open quarreling between Justice and the C.I.A. over who had overlooked evidence that the bank's officials in Rome were aware of Mr. Drogoul's machinations.

Now the F.B.I., which may have

handled some of the intelligence

prosecutors in Atlanta, is

investigating the Justice

from Rome that belatedly reached

Department. And Justice is looking

into the expense account of the

F.B.I.'s Director. Amazingly, both

the C.I.A. and F.B.I. contend they

are unable to retrieve pertinent

data from their vaunted intelligence files. This is not a case that the Justice Department can be perceived to investigate dispassionately on behalf of the Administration it represents. Perhaps even a special prosecutor couldn't clean up so embarrassing a mess. What's needed from the Attorney General, at a minimum, is less outrage and more results. A version of this editorial appears in print on October 14, 1992, on Page A00024 of the National edition with the headline: No Excuse for Mr. Barr's Outrage. Today's Paper | Subscribe

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