

Puccio drug links and Weinberg death under investigation

by Mary Jane Freeman

Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., *EIR* founder and Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the National Democratic Policy Committee, ordered on Feb. 2 that a full-scale investigation be launched into the connections between Abscam prosecutor Thomas Puccio and the Sicilian drug mafia. That investigation by the NDPC Fact-Finding Division is focusing on specific contacts between Puccio and the Palermo-based heroin-running network now under criminal indictment by Italian authorities.

The investigation was ordered by Mr. LaRouche as the result of reports by Italian sources who are in contact with personal Mafioso friends of Billy Carter in Sicily. These sources have reported that in discussions with these Mafia members, they have volunteered that their friends in the United States include not only Billy Carter but Thomas Puccio as well.

Law enforcement sources knowledgeable in the area of organized crime have pointed out that these Sicilian drug networks directly run the Gambino organized-crime interests in the United States. They have further pointed out that these drug-running interests have over the last decade successfully used Kennedy Airport, located in Puccio's federal jurisdiction, as their main port of entry for bringing heroin into the United States.

'Foul play' charged in Marie Weinberg death

LaRouche's order was preceded by surfacing of further evidence of Mafia-style tactics by perpetrators of the Abscam sting operation in the Justice Department. Highly suspicious circumstances surrounding the death last week of Cynthia M. Weinberg, wife of

Abscam conman Melvin Weinberg, led *EIR* and other U.S. news sources to conclude that "foul play"—rather than suicide—was the cause of death. Mrs. Weinberg's divorce attorney, Michael F. Dennis of Long Island, New York, subsequent to the discovery of her body just days after she had appeared on ABC's nationwide program "20/20," charged that she was murdered "by someone with a reason for silencing her."

Marie Weinberg had charged in the "20/20" broadcast that her husband had "committed perjury" in the Abscam trials. In sworn affidavits made shortly before her death, she said Mel had not merely scammed Abscam defendants into believing that they might be able to secure loans for development projects in their districts from the FBI's bogus Abdul Enterprises, but that her husband had personally extorted expensive gifts from the FBI's victims. This fact of misconduct, swore Mrs. Weinberg, was known and covered up by FBI agents presumably in charge of Mel's activity.

Should Mrs. Weinberg's charges be proven true, not only will the credibility of the Justice Department's key witness, con-artist Weinberg, be called into question but so too will the myth of what the Abscam so-called investigation was about. Since September *EIR* has informed its readers of the kind of misconduct now revealed by Mrs. Weinberg. *EIR* has pointed to the outrageous priorities of the Carter Justice Department spending millions of taxpayers' dollars to frame up its political opponents—breaching the separation of powers clause in the Constitution—while it released known terrorists and allowed drug trafficking to flourish.

The Carter holdovers in the Justice Department

today would, indeed, have reason for silencing Mrs. Weinberg to which Attorney Dennis refers. Attorney Dennis's request for the Florida authorities to investigate the likelihood of homicide has begun to be covered in the major press. On Feb. 3 the Los Angeles *Herald Examiner* ran the headline, "Attorney: Abscam Witness's Suicide Note May Be Bogus." The *Herald Examiner* story reports, " 'The suicide note mentions Richard Lee Bast,' Michael Dennis said Feb. 3, referring to a private detective whom Mrs. Weinberg had met recently. 'Now, she never knew his middle name. The FBI did, but she never heard it.' "

"The discrepancy," the *Herald Examiner* story continues, " 'casts great doubt on the conclusion that Marie Weinberg hung herself,' according to Dennis. . . . The article notes that "Dennis said the suicide note lists people Mrs. Weinberg had spoken to about her husband in the last few weeks, including two reporters and Bast."

This aspect of the so-called suicide note which the news coverage references becomes more intriguing in light of the attempt of Robert Greene—*Newsday* reporter and author of the book *Sting Man*—to give credence to Mel Weinberg's claims that columnist Jack Anderson is "morally responsible for Marie's death." In fact, if one takes into account information reported in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and elsewhere about Greene's telephone calls with Mrs. Weinberg, one could easily conclude that a note citing pressure from unnamed reporters could refer to the camp around Greene—rather than Jack Anderson.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, prior to Mrs. Weinberg's death, noted that after she had sworn out affidavits indicating she had in her possession her husband's 1980 diaries. Bob Greene told her in a phone conversation that the diaries could be "very dangerous and they would kill for that." Greene is in possession of Weinberg's diaries from 1978 and 1979, which he used in writing his laudatory account of Mel's role in Abscam.

Marie Weinberg's charges will have a full hearing before U.S. Federal District Judge William Bryant on Feb. 16. The hearing had been requested by Michael Dennis in a motion to reopen the due process questions in the case of his Abscam clients, Stanley Weisz, in light of the Marie Weinberg revelations. Significantly, when he filed his Jan. 19 motion before Judge Bryant, Dennis had pleaded for expedited action on the motion, due to the death threats Mrs. Weinberg had received from Mel's son from a former marriage just 24 hours after appearing on the "20/20" program. Further, Mrs. Weinberg began her sworn affidavit by stating: "I am married to Melvin Weinberg. I am a resident of the state of Florida and I will disclose my home address to the court *in camera*. The reason for my refusal to place my address in this affidavit is my fear that I shall come to harm if my home address is known."

While the judge did not grant Dennis's motion before Mrs. Weinberg met with her suspicious death, in an unprecedented action Feb. 1, he did deny the government's request for further delays. Bryant has, therefore, put the Justice Department in a position of having to answer the explosive charges.

Documentation

Marie Weinberg on Abscammers' M.O.

Over the course of a three-month period beginning November 1981, Mrs. Marie Weinberg, wife for 19 years of FBI-hired special "sting man" for Abscam, Melvin Weinberg, held lengthy telephone conversations with Indy Badhwar, an investigator for syndicated columnist Jack Anderson. Some of Marie Weinberg's explosive revelations were preserved on tape by Mr. Badhwar, and were introduced on Jan. 20 as transcripts in a due process appeal to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by Stanley Weisz, a target of the first Abscam case involving former Florida Rep. Richard Kelly.

Although with Mrs. Weinberg's sudden and mysterious death, Weinberg's diaries, containing devastating evidence against him and several FBI agents according to her, disappeared from her Florida home, transcripts of her telephone conversations with journalist Badhwar were in themselves sufficient to demonstrate the following:

1. Contrary to Mel Weinberg's testimony on the stand in certain Abscam cases, he had received and kept thousands of dollars worth of "gifts" from Abscam targets who believed he would pass them to the "sheik." She indicated that this included a sum of \$45,000 from Camden Mayor Angelo Errichetti, later convicted in Abscam.

2. Agents John Good and Anthony Amoroso were aware of the "gifts" and other "scams" being conducted by Weinberg throughout the Abscam operations; they covered up the fact—receiving "gifts" from Weinberg—and lied on the stand during Abscam court proceedings to perpetuate the cover-up.

3. Charged with keeping Weinberg under close supervision at all times, agents Good and Amoroso frequently left him alone to visit girl-friends, or used a yacht provided by Weinberg for their illicit rendezvous—with Weinberg gathering evidence of their inappropriate or wrongful conduct to both insulate himself from prosecution or

scrutiny and, in the words of his wife, to be able “to blackmail them for life.”

4. Even during the covert phase of Abscam, before the story was “leaked” officially to the press, Weinberg and his FBI supervisors were in close touch in the *New York Times* through journalist Leslie Maitland.

5. The FBI, Weinberg, and Abscam prosecutor Thomas Puccio withheld evidence and denied the existence of evidence comprised of telephone messages left for Weinberg on his tape-answering machine.

In these telephone conversations and a sworn affidavit, Mrs. Weinberg thus established that the key government witness and agent for Abscam, Mel Weinberg, had repeatedly perjured himself on the stand, that this was known to FBI agents, who perjured themselves in turn.

The Badhwar-Marie Weinberg tapes open with Mrs. Weinberg discussing her discovery that her husband had been practicing bigamy for 14 years with Evelyn Knight, a partner in various of his scam operations. She recounts the efforts of *Newsday* reporter Bob Greene (author of *The Sting Man* book about Weinberg) to procure his diaries, then in Mrs. Weinberg’s possession.

Weinberg funds terrorists

The following is excerpted from The Sting Man, Robert Greene’s biography of Mel Weinberg, the U.S. government’s chief Abscam witness.

Weinberg is sitting in an Italian cave that overlooks the sea. The cave is floored with thick rugs. Weinberg sits at an exquisitely set dining table with Lady Diane and a crippled man with braces on both legs. An impeccably attired waiter, sniffing at Weinberg’s request for pizza, serves entrees of veal scallopini à la Marsala. Farther down in the cave, a pianist plays Italian love songs. The cave belongs to Anthony, the crippled man, whom Weinberg calls Squeaky. He is the son of a wealthy Italian contractor, and is a leading fundraiser for the terrorist Red Brigade. Anthony’s legs were ruined in an accident at a secret Rome bomb factory operated by the Brigade.

Weinberg keeps him supplied, for \$5,000 each, with blank Certificates of Deposit from offshore banks, which Anthony uses to raise much more money for the Brigade. Anthony’s translator is Mario, his omnipresent bodyguard. Weinberg gazes around approvingly, lifts a wine-glass to his hosts, and says: “Hey, Squeaky. Bein’ a commie bombthrower ain’t such a bad line of work!”

She then described an instance of her husband’s perjury:

Marie: I spoke to Bob Greene, and I mentioned just off-hand: I told you one lie, I’m sorry I did—I said I burned the book—but I didn’t . . . I put it in the house . . . somewhere very safe, so I told Bob. I wanted to see what he would say. . . . He said that he had the books to 1978 and to 1979, but he didn’t have 1980. I said I have the 1980 [diary-ed.]. . . . So he said, well, don’t do anything rash, don’t do anything.

Badhwar: Uh, uh. . . .

Marie: He did commit perjury on the stand.

Badhwar: Where?

Marie: . . . I know of three things and . . . I was there.

Badhwar: What was that? (Marie laughs softly)

Badhwar: Tell me. . . .

Marie: . . . There are three definite things and . . . also something with the south (inaudible) sewer district. Vincent Cuiti . . . that was in the papers. Vince got convicted.

Badhwar: Uh huh.

Marie: Vince was innocent.

Badhwar: Well, are you talking about perjury on the stand in New York, in the present trial, or the older trial?

Marie: I’m talking about the present and the older one.

Badhwar: Yeah?

Marie: With Errichetti . . . and ah, its’s a shame.

Badhwar: Did he commit perjury in the Williams trials, too?

Marie: Ah, that . . . I can’t say because I didn’t know that much about the Williams trial. I know that he talked a lot with Feinberg.

One of the judges trying Abscam cases was George Pratt of Brooklyn—a man who advised the jury to convict Sen. Harrison Williams, among others, on testimony provided by Weinberg. Marie Weinberg described how Mel lied effectively before Pratt and other judges:

Badhwar: You know, when the Justice Department was investigating these leaks, did they come to talk to Mel?

Marie: Oh sure, we had two guys here, two special agents. But Mel was cool as could be. And they were sharp guys, let me tell you; they weren’t fools.

Badhwar: He just said he didn’t know anything? . . .

Marie: Well, . . . he had an answer for everything. Like

in court, they had top attorneys, and those attorneys said that they were gonna kill him, but nobody pushed far enough and they asked him the wrong questions. Because Mel's got a sense of humor. . . . So, he got the crowd with him, and once you do that, well, every one else he makes look like a fool. And the funny thing, every one else is telling the truth. . . .

Badhwar: Yeah, . . . I think he really impressed that judge up in New York, that Pratt character.

Marie: Oh, you know, when the due-process came out? He read it and he brought home a copy of it . . . he wanted me to read it. . . . So, I'm reading through the thing, and I noticed that Pratt was quoting him.

Badhwar: And says that he should get a medal or something. . . .

Marie: And you know, I remember saying to Mel . . . Mel, aren't you the one that said you can't cheat an honest man? I said, Pratt's got that right in here! Mel says, yeah, you'd think he was my father. Pratt thought he was funny, a Johnny Carson. . . . He loved his sense of humor.

Badhwar: Did he know Pratt before?

Marie: No, he never knew Pratt, but evidently Mel was the charmer. . . . He came on like he was doing this for the betterment of society!

Badhwar: Yeah . . . they did a lot of judge-shopping. . . .

Marie: Listen, I've got even better ones for you.

Marie Weinberg was dead by Jan. 28. The "better ones" remain to be discovered.

'Congress could open itself to be purged'

by Andrew Rotstein

Condemning Justice Department Abscam tactics of political targeting and entrapment, former Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack held a well-attended press conference in Washington Feb. 4 to issue a defense of Sen. Harrison Williams. The event, sponsored by the National Democratic Policy Committee, released statements from a dozen prominent civil-rights figures calling for a complete probe of Abscam itself prior to any Senate action on the expulsion move against Williams.

Jack, a member of the NDPC Advisory Board, was joined by Barbara Simmons, executive director of the

Washington chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a member of the District of Columbia's Democratic Central Committee.

Also present was Dennis Speed of New York, co-chairman of the NDPC's newly formed Fact-Finding Division. Speed announced his group's ongoing investigation of the ties of Abscam "sting man" Melvin Weinberg to the funding of international terrorism and of the ties of Williams' Abscam prosecutor, Thomas Puccio of the Eastern District of New York, to Sicilian attorney Michele Papa of "Billygate" and world heroin trade infamy. The press conference was attended by the Associated Press, United Press International, CBS News, Washington's all-news WTOP radio, and others.

The cumulative effects of revelations of government misconduct and links to the international criminal syndicate, coupled with grass-roots outrage at the affair, threaten to upset the Abscammers' case against Williams. On Feb. 23, the question of the Senate Ethics Committee's recommendation to expel Harrison Williams will be taken up by the full Senate.

A call to delay those proceedings until the Justice Department and FBI are fully probed has already been signed by 250 labor and political officials throughout the nation. The statements released Feb. 4 from black and Hispanic figures, including Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Cleveland City Council President George Forbes, reflect the knowledge of these leaders of past government persecution of civil-rights leaders like Martin Luther King. A parallel concern emerged the same day on Capitol Hill (see Congressional Closeup).

The statement from Coleman Young emphasized, "In times of great economic crisis, government officials and political leaders must be free to be bold and fight—against significant odds—to achieve progress. If our leaders are subject to harrassment and entrapment . . . then few will retain the courage to lead such political struggles."

A similar press conference in New York the previous week received prominent coverage in the city's minority press, though it was boycotted by other leading media.

Additional statements condemning Abscam were released from Calvin Lockridge, District of Columbia School Board; William Dyson, Chairman, Connecticut Legislative Black Caucus; Jose Torres, President, Puerto Rican Civil Rights Association; Dr. William Banks, Supreme President, International Masons and President, WGPR-TV, Detroit; Robert "Buddy" Battle, Director, Region 1-A, United Auto Workers; Sandra Esparza, National President for Youth, League of United Latin American Citizens; Joe Chaneyfield, Vice President, Service Employees International Union Local 305, Newark, New Jersey; William Goodman, Business Manager, Laborers International Union Local 135, Norristown, Pennsylvania.