

Notes for the Record

On Sunday 3/5/67 I phoned Leo Sauvage to inquire about his health. He was still unwell and said that he intended to cancel an appearance on Channel 13 Monday night with Stanley Ross, editor of El Tiempo, a former Trujillo agent and rabid anti-Castroite. I suggested that he might give Salandria's name as a possible substitute; I then phoned Vince to alert him.

When I arrived home from the office at about 7 p.m. Monday 3/6/67 I had a phonecall from Mitchell Krauss, Channel 13, saying that Salandria had turned down his invitation to appear and had recommended that I be invited. After considerable pressure, I reluctantly agreed to appear. However, a few minutes later, Harold Weisberg called and when I told him about the Channel 13 deal he strongly advised me NOT to appear. He said that Krauss had several times misled him (Weisberg), misled him (to advertise Epstein's book), and failed to meet commitments. Moreover, he said, Stanley Ross did not merit the time of a critic—his Castro-plot fantasy would fail of its own inertia and illogic; he was a smear-artist, and it would be reckless to make any appearance with him.

I then tried to reach Krauss to say that I could not come; he was out, but someone else took the message, who seemed to be an courier with the situation.

At about 10:25 p.m. Ross and a lawyer, Eaton or Eagan, made their pitch for a Castro-directed assassination by one of 5 or 6 "teams" and gave an inaccurate and wholly misleading account of Gongora's confinement at Creedmore State (Mental) Hospital. As they went off the air, I phoned the studio to correct a number of their false statements; Ross had left but I told Eaton that he would find information about Gongora in OE 1444—that he had a history of mental illness and felonious assault, had been diagnosed at Bellevue Hospital as a paranoid schizophrenic, and had written to RPK in October 1963 naming the wife of a Batistiane as a "displaced assassin" dangerous to JFK. Eaton seemed unable to decide whether I was friend or enemy but expressed gratitude for the information. He filed a writ of habeus corpus yesterday for Gongora's release and a hearing is to take place this morning, in Queens County.

I then listened to the NBC-TV 11 o'clock news, which featured an interview with Merriman Smith of AP, who had just returned from New Orleans. He said emphatically that Garrison was working on a theory of ANTI-Castro/American (right-wing) conspiracy; he generally sneered at and denigrated Garrison but at the same time was sufficiently cautious as not to be out on a limb if Garrison came through with proof of his theory.

Next I tuned in Barry Gray on radio, to find Stanley Ross (alone this time) again spouting his Castro-conspiracy theory. But he said some amusing things—i.e., that the Garrison investigation might have been inspired by the Government to take the heat off LBJ who, thanks to the Manchester book and Macbird, was widely suspected of being behind the assassination. Barry Gray obviously was troubled by Garrison's "respectability" and was not ready to dismiss him a priori as a publicity-hound or phoney. Ross kept insinuating that he and Garrison were in constant communication and working together. (Gray disparaged Mark Lane for having failed to turn up evidence of conspiracy, as Garrison had done; Ross, oddly enough, praised Lane and his book.) During a station break, I called Barry Gray's producer, whom I know from my appearances on his program, pointing out (1) that Merriman Smith and others had left no doubt that Garrison was not working, as Ross claimed, on a pro- or anti-Castro conspiracy theory but clearly and unequivocally on an ANTI-Castro (Batistiane) right-wing theory; and (2) pointing out also that there was no great mystery about Gongora, as Ross insinuated, and that his history was presented in OE 1444. She was afraid that she could not get that information to Gray before the conversation resumed, and apparently she could not, for Gray continued in the same uninformed manner as before.

During the resumed conversation, Ross made the absurd claim that the "authorities" had suppressed the Capital Record "The Controversy." Gray then said that that record had been aired for the first time on his show, with "Sylvia Meagher, who wrote an article in Esquire, and Mark Lane (sic) and I don't remember who else present." He said that he thought very little of the record and of its producer, who had been on the same show, and that he (Barry Gray) "would not give 50¢ to bail him (Schiller) out." That confirms what his producer had told me at the time—that Gray utterly detested Schiller and was sorry he had given him a platform and would never have him back.

Ross was highly critical of the Warren Commission, despite lip service to the eminence of its members; he referred several times to the continued withholding of 30% of the WC documents, still "classified", and to the results of a Harris survey published that day, showing that the majority of the public do not believe the lone-assassin myth, but also, that the majority does not want the case reopened. Ross, however, made a strong pitch for a new investigation --which he hopes of course would lead to an invasion of Cuba, he was quite forthright in so saying. However, Barry Gray emphasized, and Ross agreed, that this was a highly dangerous course and that nothing should be done unless and until there was absolute proof of Castro's guilt. (Real Americans, in their passion for justice, as any fool can see.)

Meagher 3/7/67