

Schlam's Father Insists Drugs Were Administered to Prosecutor in Roncallo Case With Hostile Intent

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The physician-father of Peter R. Schlam, an assistant United States attorney, said yesterday that the drugs that felled his son during the trial of Representative Angelo D. Roncallo last month had been administered without the victim's knowledge over a period of several days by someone with hostile intent.

The physician, Dr. Isaac Schlam of Lindenhurst, L.I., insisted that his 30-year-old son had been the victim of foul play and described as "ridiculous" reports that either he had provided the drugs or that they had been self-administered.

Representative Roncallo, a Republican who represents the Third Congressional District in parts of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, said in another interview that he was preparing a bill of particulars for the House Judiciary Committee and the Justice Department charging that the United States Attorney's office in Brooklyn had created "a web of deceit" in his extortion-conspiracy trial.

The 49-year-old legislator from Massapequa, L.I., was acquitted on May 17, a week after Mr. Schlam, chief prosecutor in the case, fell ill and was unable to appear at the trial in Westbury, L.I. Mystery and conflicting reports have clouded the nature of Mr. Schlam's illness.

Multiple Investigations

Adding to the seeming confusion of the case is the welter of investigations that have sprung up. In addition to an inquiry by the office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, for whom Mr. Schlam works, other investigations have been initiated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Justice Department in Washington, the Suffolk County police and the Suffolk Medical Examiner's Office.

In addition, the House Judiciary Committee has begun an investigation at the behest of Representative Roncallo, who has accused the prosecutor's office of having employed "Gestapo tactics" and of having brought charges against him for political reasons.

The F.B.I. investigation is said to have drawn to a close quietly, with inconclusive findings. On the basis of data gathered by the F.B.I., Justice Department sources were reported on Thursday to be leaning to-



The New York Times  
Angelo D. Roncallo

ward the belief that the drugs that felled Mr. Schlam were self-administered or administered by his father.

But United States Attorney David G. Trager declined to comment on this or any other aspect of the case yesterday. And despite the proliferation of investigations, there were no answers forthcoming to a number of crucial questions.

The main question was over the nature of the illness that felled Mr. Schlam at a time when, according to observers, the Government's case against Mr. Roncallo was faltering. Was it caused by drugs or exhaustion? If drugs caused the illness, who administered them, and why?

If the drugs were self-administered or administered by Mr. Schlam's father, why did the Government assert in court that it was a case of foul play?

And if no foul play was involved, then questions arise over whether the Government knowingly lied, or was itself misled.

The trial of Representative Roncallo had been under way for more than a week when, on the morning of May 9, Mr. Schlam's roommate, Thomas P. Puccio, an assistant United attorney, telephoned the presiding judge, Edward R. Neaher, to say that the prosecutor was ill and would be absent from the courtroom.

Mr. Schlam was subsequently taken from his apartment at 76 State Street in Brooklyn Heights to his father's Linden-

hurst home, and was admitted the next day to Good Samaritan in West Islip, L. I.

Authoritative sources have said that an analysis of his blood that day showed the presence of five drugs—a sedative known as methaqualone, two as-yet-unidentified types of barbiturates, salicylate (aspirin) and phenacetin, a pain killer. The sources said each of the drugs, with the exception of the methaqualone, had been found in a medicine cabinet in Mr. Schlam's apartment.

The young prosecutor has been vacationing in Florida and has been unavailable for comment. His father, reached at home by telephone yesterday, described his son as having recovered completely from the illness, and said he would be returning from vacation on Monday.

At the same time, Dr. Schlam vehemently denied that he or his son was responsible for the presence of the drugs in the prosecutor's body chemistry.

"Absolutely, positively, Peter doesn't take any drugs," Dr. Schlam declared, adding that he himself did not even prescribe barbiturates for his patients and "definitely" did not administer any drugs to his son.

The physician charged that the drugging had been part of a pattern of threats and harassment against the prosecution during and preceding the Roncallo trial. "It wasn't only this incident," he said, "it was a number of incidents — a sequence of events together."

Among these, he said, were anonymous threatening telephone calls to himself, to the prosecutor and even to the prosecutor's sister in Pennsylvania; flat tires on Mr. Schlam's Government car and Mr. Puccio's private car at the courthouse in Westbury, and a note left on the windshield of Mr. Puccio car that read: "You have a flat tire."

his son fell ill and found him

Dr. Schlam also contended that the drugs found in his son's system had been administered clandestinely over several days, possibly in food or beverages he ingested in the courthouse or elsewhere.

The doctor said that he had gone to court on the day before

to be "lethargic," and had known "something was wrong."

"I said, 'Hey Pete, what happened to you?' I didn't think at that time he was drugged, but he was not acting himself. He's brilliant, smart, alert. He didn't respond in the usual way. He was just not himself."

Dr. Schlam said his son apparently had been given drugs

"over a couple of days, starting on Monday." It was a Thursday on which he fell ill.

Justice Department sources later confirmed that various suspicious incidents—the anonymous home calls and the air let out of the prosecutors' car tires—had occurred and may have constituted a pattern of harassment.

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