

Box 30
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Doc. 1

HSCA Interview w/ Joseph Piccolo, 11 August 1978

On August 11, 1978 at 2:00 p.m. Dan Hardway and Charles Berk of the HSCA conducted a two hour interview with Joseph Piccolo, Jr. Mr. Piccolo, ^{age 43,} is presently an employee of the CIA working as an operations officer in the DDO. He joined the CIA in February 1957, and, except for one year of duty with the Air Force ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ had continued in his employment with the CIA.

Prior to the beginning of the interview Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine the CIA's omnibus release letter of March 23, 1978. After his examination, Mr. Piccolo indicated that he fully understood the letter's meaning. Mr. Berk then explained to Mr. Piccolo the mandate and purpose of the HSCA.

Mr. Piccolo stated that at the time of JFK's assassination he was a support assistance analyst in the DDO. The responsibilities included maintenance of records, running of trace, and

(2)

Spanish language analysis for purpose of operational support.

Subsequent to this position, Mr. Piccolo undertook training during the Spring of 1964 to become an operations officer.

Mr. Piccolo further stated that his professional areas of interest were mainly ~~concerned~~ ~~with~~ Latin American. He also

indicated that he served at [the] [CIA's] Mexico City Station from December 1957 - January 1960 and from August 1965 to January 1968.

It was further ascertained that Mr. Piccolo was involved in some Agency operations directed against Cuba during the time periods 1962 - January 1968 ~~1968~~, January 1969 - Jan 1970 and for a 3 month period during 1975.

Mr. Piccolo was asked he was familiar with the cryptonym AMMUS/1. ^{CA/17} He responded affirmatively and stated that A/1 was the first COIS defector from the then newly formed DSI, the CIA's Cuban counterpart for external security and counter-intelligence operations.

Mr. Piccolo stated that he did not participate in the ^{initial} handling and debriefing of A/1 but became involved in the case during the summer of 1964 when he first met A/1. At that time, Mr. Piccolo was assigned to "handle" A/1, i.e., to ensure that A/1 was properly accommodated ^{and escorted} and to provide companionship ~~for~~ for A/1. ^(over) late

Mr. Piccolo ~~became~~ became responsible for debriefing A/1. Mr. Piccolo was not able to recall the exact time period during which he debriefed A/1 but believed he debriefed A/1 for approximately a four to six month period. Mr. Piccolo stated that [Harold Swenson] Barney Hedberg and Dan Flores also debriefed A/1. ~~He~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~recall~~ ~~the~~ ~~names~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~other~~ ~~debriefers~~

Mr. Piccolo was queried as to the responsibilities of WH/SAS/4, the CIA component responsible for the A/1 case. He indicated that this component ^{was} worked ^{with} ^{Harold Swenson} against the Cuban Intelligence Services. He further indicated that

ME
DIX

He indicated that he could contact
w/ A/1 from 1966 and the last info
material he had was about A/1 was from
Miami 7/19/66 and adjustments
in well to refer to the June 7

Mr. Piccolo recalled that A/1 had
been debriefed ^{in Canada} after his defection.
He stated that the objectives
of the initial debriefings would
have been to gain biographic
data on persons associated
with the Cuban intelligence
service and information on
persons who might collaborate
with the CIA. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ As for the filing
of the debriefing reports, Mr.
Piccolo said the filing procedure
would have been dictated by
the manner in which the
case was handled i.e. by
subject or cryptonym or person-
ality. He did state that
debriefing reports would have
initially been held in the office
handling the case. These reports
would have been "held tight" to
allow time for operations to be developed
~~_____~~ intelligence
~~_____~~ while security risks
are at a minimum. ~~_____~~ When
~~_____~~ where such reports would
now be located Mr. Piccolo
said he did not know.

~~_____~~ Mr. Piccolo indicated that

WH/SAS/CI to carry out its functions may have run double agent operations

Mr. Piccolo was next queried whether he recalled a CIA Component referred to as the "domestic exploitation section".

Mr. Piccolo stated that this terminology was not familiar to him but that domestic exploitation would most likely have been located in a positive intelligence section of the Agency such as the Domestic Contacts Division. ^{However} He ~~did~~ state that recruitment of a contact in the country for ~~utilization~~ utilization in foreign operations would have been

the responsibility of every operations officer. He ~~did~~ doubt that the Western Hemisphere Division would have run such an office but that operational recruitment would have been handled as part of a specific project or program.

Mr. Piccolo was queried whether A/1 provided any information to the CIA on the

Harvey Oswald and his possible contact with the DGI. He responded that he recalls no A/I debriefing reports providing such information nor did A/I provide such information to him ~~_____~~ Mr.

Hedalgo further declared that Moore [Swenson] Hedalgo, and Flores never indicated to him that A/I had ever provided any information on Lee Harvey Oswald.

Mr. Piccolo was next queried as ^{to} the meaning of the term "Special Intelligence". He indicated that the term usually applies to the interception of communication e.g. signal intelligence which would include radio waves and radar but would not include electronic surveillance. Mr. Piccolo stated that ~~_____~~ ~~_____~~ special intelligence would have been handled by "Dwain", a special unit segregated from other agency components.

MC
DGI

Mr. Piccolo was next asked if he had ever seen any photographs of Lee Harvey Oswald resulting from the photographic surveillance operation conducted by the CIA Mexico City station. He responded in the affirmative stating that he saw 2 photographs of LHO either entering or leaving the Cuban Embassy/Consulate in Mexico City. The first photograph was a 3 1/4 full shot of LHO exposing his left profile as LHO looked downward. The second photograph which Mr. Piccolo recollected seeing was a back of the head view of LHO.

At the point in the interview Mr. Piccolo was shown WCF 237, the famous photo of the Mexico City Mystery Men. All printed identifications ~~bordering~~ the photograph were covered prior to Mr. Piccolo's examination. Mr. Piccolo was then asked who the man in WCF 237 was. Mr. Piccolo responded that he did not know but that the

person was not Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Piccolo was next shown a ~~full frontal~~ ^{full frontal} head photograph of LHO. This photograph also had all printed material ~~blacked out~~ ^{blacked out}, disordering its surface covered. When asked ~~who~~ who the person in the photograph was, after a moment's pause, Mr. Piccolo ^{correctly} identified ~~the~~ Lee Harvey Oswald as the person in the photograph.

~~Mr. Piccolo~~ Mr. Piccolo explained the circumstances ~~under which~~ under which he viewed the above-referenced photographs. He recalled that the photos were from the Mexico City Station surveillance operation but could not recall if he saw the photographs at Has or in Mexico City. He indicated that he had previously heard "through the grapevine" that such photographs had been found. He further stated that approximately 2-4 weeks prior to the date of this interview Mr.

[Dan Niesciun]⁰³ had told Mr. Piccolo that Charlotte Bustos ^{"the gal at the Mexico desk"} had found ^{the above-referenced} photographs of LHO. Mr. Piccolo assumed that [Mr.⁰³ Niesciun] had ~~not~~ ^{not} become aware of Ms. Bustos' discovery through [Mr.⁰³ Niesciun] research into the Oswald case.

Finally, Mr. Piccolo speculated that any photos ^{generated} from Mexico City surveillance operations would have been sent to headquarters & that he presumed someone would have found the LHO photograph at headquarters.

Mr. Piccolo was ^{not} asked ^{whether he is acquainted with} ~~the following~~ the following people (response indicated)

- 1) George Wittne - no
- 2) Douglas Supton no
- 3) David Phillips yes
- 4) E. Howard Hunt yes, but not well
- 5) Maurice Bishop no
- 6) Fnu Crozer no
- 7) Antonio Veciana no
- 8) [Stanley⁰³ Watson] yes, Deputy Chief of my cy station
- 9) Claire Bonotra yes, in my cy Embassy from Dept of State
- 10) Silvia Duran no recollection

- 11) Manuel Cabillo - no
- 12) Anne Goodpasture yes, (over)
- 13) LIR106/3 - yes, but can recall no more

14) Wm Scott - yes; Mr. Piccolo was queried whether Mr. Scott maintained a personal safe in Mexico City while he was Chief of Station there. Mr. Piccolo responded that restricted materials would have been kept in a safe. Mr. Piccolo ~~is~~ defined restricted materials as being very sensitive, ~~and~~ i.e. not finding its way into routine file. Mr. Piccolo stated that he does not know who would have had access to such a safe.

~~Mr. Piccolo was left~~
~~Shawna. All debriefing report~~
~~9/18/77, 1964 concerning the~~
~~activities of DSI officers in the~~
~~field regarding visa appli-~~
~~cations.~~

12) knew her as Win Scott's assis-
stant - she might have
found the LHO photographs

Mr. Piccolo was next asked if he could identify the function of the CIA component C1/S16. He responded that it was his belief that C1/S16 dealt w/ cyphers because the designation seem to imply it was a Special Intelligence Group or a Signal Intelligence Group.

At this point in the interview Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine a 5 May 1964 CIA debriefing report of A/1 regarding A/1's knowledge of LHO's possible contacts with the DSI. Mr. Piccolo stated that he does not recall ever seeing the ~~report~~ report or the information contained in it. He had no recollection of Rogelio Rodriguez, Luisa Calderon, and his recollection of Manuel Vega was poor.

Mr. Piccolo was next asked to examine a 7 May 64 CIA memorandum prepared by [Harold Swenson] which elaborates on A/1's knowledge of LHO and the JFK assassination.

Mr. Piccolo was interviewed A/1
had ~~been~~ been questioned
during his polygraph in 1964.
about his knowledge of LHO.
Mr. Piccolo stated he did not know
that he did not see the polygraph
results but does recall that a person
was present during the polygraph

Mr. Piccolo stated that he had never seen this memorandum and that it did not reflect his recollection regarding Luisa Calderon.

Mr. Piccolo was then asked if he could define a Black Tape 201 file. He stated that ~~such~~ such a file has been retired and is black taped to hide either an operational relationship or other sensitive matter.

This file is enveloped and sealed. He indicated that ~~a~~ a name trace should indicate if a file had been black taped. Moreover, he stated that it would be a very rare occurrence for an agent ^{file} to be maintained on a soft file basis.

Mr. Piccolo was next asked to examine CIA debriefing no. 65 of A/1 pertaining to the duties of ~~a~~ a DSI officer in the field regarding visa applicants. Mr. Piccolo ~~did not~~ did not recall ~~ever~~ ever reviewing this report. He indicated that

The ^{subject} report appeared accurate. He further stated the D61 used extensive consulate cover in its operations. Mr. Piccolo stated that he believed Eusebio Azcue, former Cuban Consul in Mexico City, to have been a D61 ~~office~~ office.

Mr. Piccolo was queried concerning his knowledge of the diagram 2R. Specifically, he was asked what significance the notation 2R ~~had~~ had when placed next to the name of D61 officers Mirabal & Vega as occurs in a 30 April 64 excerpt from CIA ^{from} de briefing report of A/1. Piccolo stated that the 2R probably stood for 2RNICK, a project designed to identify ^{the} clandestine Cuban intelligence network.

Mr. Piccolo next examined a 17 July 1964, CIA contact report written by himself. Mr. Piccolo verified his authorship of the contact report and further stated that the Cuban defector AMNIP/1 identified in the report had been a Cuban G-2 agent.

who defected in 1962 or 1963. Mr. Piccolo further indicated that the photographs examined by A/1 and #MNIP/1, as reported in the contact report, probably originated with the LIONION ^{surveillance} operation.

Mr. Piccolo next ~~was~~ asked to detail his knowledge of Teresa Proenza Proenza. He stated that she was related to the manager of Cubana Airlines in Mexico. He further declared that he had no knowledge that Proenza had ever been associated with the CIA but did admit that she had been of operational interest to the Agency. He did not know if she had been a target for recruitment by the CIA. However Mr. Piccolo declines to discuss further Mrs Proenza's relationship with the CIA unless HSCA could ~~be~~ demonstrate the relevancy of the questioning.

Lastly, Mr. Piccolo was asked to examine CIA dispatch HMNW -11935, 1 September 1963, regarding Luisa Calderon. Mr. Piccolo indicated that the

designation therein of SAS/EOB
represents Cuban Task Force/
External Operations Branch.
EOB, he stated operated outside
of Cuba. Furthermore, Mr. Piccolo
stated that he knew the author
of the dispatch, Dave Ronis, whom
he stated had retired from the
CIA.

Q Who would have handled special intelligence -
 A staff D or Division D
 Q Was it FI staff
 A No, it would have been a special group

HTLINGUAL would have been separate from Division D - it was on C staff

In Mexi - Aug 65 - Jan 68

(" 57 - 60)
 (" 60 - 65 } in HQ

was involved in B. P ops - spec'ly support at HQ

prepared names, asst'd operational officers

Didn't know George Wittner
 " " Supton

Did know Dave Phillips
 " " Hunt but not well

Didn't know Maurice Bishop
 " " Crozer
 " " Meciana

Did know (Stanley⁰³ Watson) - Dpty Chief, State - MEXY
 " " Boonstra - Dept. of State

When in Mex was assigned to Cuban Section of MEXY Sta.

doesn't recall for sure, it was some time

He has heard that MxSt had photo of LHO - after assas., but saw copy of photo from MxSta

✓ photo of LHO entering or exiting
Cuban Embassy was taken

✓ looking downward - left profile
this was famous LHO photo

✓ 3/4 full shot

✓ saw 2 photos

o the other was back of head

✓ says if saw photo of man 6'3"
250 lbs, short hair - would
know it wasn't LHO

✓ knew Charlotte Bustos

✓ he heard before ITSCA publicity
that C.B. had found a photo

✓ ran surveillance ops in Mex City
helped the agents who ran the
operation -
was called LIONION

[Dan ⁰³ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ [Niesciur ⁰³]

✓ said Charlotte Bustos had found a
photo

o assumed [PN ⁰³] found it through
his research into the case

✓ Doesn't recall S. Dwan

✓ ~~has~~ has heard Liring/3 but
can't recall ~~it~~ anything

✓ doesn't recall Manuel Calvillo

Dan asks again about LHO photo

✓ ~~do~~ says picture he saw quite a few years

ago - was LHO going into Cuban

Embassy - wasn't Soviet

Embassy

"The gal at Mexi desk found it"

✓ Knew Ann Goodpasture - not positive

but she might have found LHO

photo - knew her as Win Scott asst -

no specific CI duties

but worked in this area

✓ Win Scott had a safe where

stored materials

✓ ↓ best COS encountered in Agency

would have kept restricted materials

in the safe - very sensitive

stuff that

we wouldn't find

its way into

sensitive

files

✓ doesn't know

who had access to safe

for 2

days

visa

way would be

paved

but should

look at it in

perspective

of the times

✓ Walk in at Sov. Emb. would have

trouble getting quick visa if

not know or id'd as CIA emp -

would need proof of who you

are - if had valuable intelligence

material would be different,

never heard of Molla Bay mining Co.

for expedition
visa
to S. U

member of CP

agent

person of interest to S. U

" " to Block country

