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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 ~~in 1958~~ 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

①

(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 [redacted]

[redacted] 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 Hedelgaard and Dan Flores also debriefed A/1. ~~Mr. Piccolo~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~recall~~ ~~the~~ ~~exact~~ ~~time~~ ~~period~~ ~~during~~ ~~which~~ ~~he~~ ~~debriefed~~ ~~A/1~~.

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

He indicated that he could contact
w/ A/1 person in 1966 and the last
material he had was about A/1 was located
in Miami, Florida and had just
well to refer to the source

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
~~_____~~ 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~~ did state that recruitment of ^{a contact} persons in the country for ~~utilization~~ utilization in foreign operations would have been

the responsibility of every operations officer. He ~~did~~ doubts 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 contacts with the DSI. 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.

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DVI

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 35mm 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 photographs 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} ~~head~~ photograph of LHO. This photograph also had all printed material ~~blacked out~~, obscuring its surface cover. When asked ~~who~~ who the person in the photograph was, after a moment's pause, Mr. Piccolo ^{correctly} identified ~~it~~ 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 H.A.S. 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.

[redacted] 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 [redacted] had ~~not~~ ^{not} become aware of Mo. Bustos' discovery through [redacted] research into the Oswald case.

Finally, Mr. Piccolo speculated that any photos 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 next asked ^{whether he is acquainted with} [redacted] the following people (response indicated)

- 1) [redacted] - no
- 2) Douglas Supton no
- 3) David Phillips yes
- 4) E. Howard Hunt yes, but not well
- 5) Maurice Bishop no
- 6) FNU [redacted] no
- 7) Antonio Peciana no
- 8) [redacted] 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 Cavillo - no
- 12) Anne Goodpasture yes, (over)
- 13) LIR 106/3 - 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~~
~~showing a A/I Deliberate report~~
~~of 8/2/64 concerning the~~
~~identities of DSI officers in the~~
~~field regarding over appli-~~
~~cat.~~

12) knew her as Wm Smith'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/ cypher 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, Luis 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 Swanson] which elaborates on A/1's knowledge of LHO and the JFK assassination.

Mr. Piccolo was interviewed on 4/1/64. He had 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 polygraphs results but does recall that 2 persons were present during the polygraphs.

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

Mr. Piccolo was then asked if he could define a Black Tape 201 file. He stated that 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 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 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 DSI officer in the field regarding visa applicants. Mr. Piccolo did not recall ever reviewing this report. He indicated that

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

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 names of DBI officers Mirabal & Vega as occurs in a 30 April 64 excerpt from CIA ^{mi.} de briefing report of A/I. 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 HMWIP/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 Cadena 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 declared 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 HMW - 11935, 1 September 1963, regarding Susana 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, [redacted], 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

HTLINSAL 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'l support at HQ

prepared memos, asst'd operational officers

Did know George Wittner

" " Supton

Did know Dave Phillips

" " Hunt but not well

Didn't know Maurice Bishop

" "

" [redacted] Meciana

Did know [redacted] Dpty Chief, Stat - MEX

" " Boonstra - Dept. of State

When in Mex was assigned to Cuban section of MxSta.

it is clear for sure it doesn't was seen - fudo

He has heard that MxSta 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 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 agent who ran the
operation -
was called LIONION

[03] ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ [03]

✓ said Charlotte Bustos had found a
photo

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

✓ Doesn't recall S. Dwan

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

✓ doesn't recall Manuel Calvillo

✓ Dan asks again about LHO photo
says picture he saw quite a few years
ago - was LHO going into Cuban
Embassy - wasn't Soviet
Embassy

"He got a Mexi de la fundit"

✓ Knew Ann Goodpasture - not positive
but she might have found LHO
photo - knew her as Win Scott's 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
wouldn't find
its way into
sensitive
files

✓ doesn't know
who had access to safe

for 2
days
visas
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 expeditions
visa
to S. U

member of CP

agent

person of interest to S. U

" " to Block country

