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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : NSA
RECORD NUMBER : 144-10001-10278

RECORDS SERIES :

AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : NSA
FROM : NSA
TO :

TITLE :
EAST GERMAN PARTY REPORTS ON REACTIONS TO DEATH OF US PRESIDENT ~~[R]~~

DATE : 11/26/63
PAGES : 6

SUBJECTS :
ASSASSINATION, JOHN KENNEDY

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : ~~TOP SECRET UMBRA~~
RESTRICTIONS : 1B
CURRENT STATUS : X
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 07/24/98

OPENING CRITERIA :
ORIGINATING AGENCY'S DETERMINATION REQUIRED

COMMENTS :

DRV FM: NSA/CSS Manual 123-2
Dated: 24 February 1998

DRV FM: NSA/CSS Manual 123-2
Dated: 24 February 1998
DECL ON: X1,X3,X5,X6,X7,X8

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[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

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26 Nov 63

1. EAST GERMAN PARTY REPORTS ON REACTIONS TO DEATH OF US PRESIDENT

Reports of 23 November sent by radiotelephone from East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) headquarters in three of the fourteen administrative districts in East Germany have noted initial reactions in East Germany to the 22 November assassination of President Kennedy. Extracts from these reports follow: (2/R7/CCY/R284-63)

Karl Marx Stadt, 0345 EST, 23 November

"Rush information report.

"Re: Assassination of US President Kennedy.

"According to a report from Kreis [county] headquarters Brand-Erbisdorf, streamers of black crepe were displayed this evening in the Kreis City in connection with the assassination of the President of the United States.

"This is concentrated in particular on two thoroughfares.

"Crepe was likewise displayed in the show window of the GST [i.e., Society for Sport and Technology]

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on the show windows at the railroad station, on the board on Bahnhofstrasse, on a wooden door at the railroad station, in the waiting room of the Reichsbahn, and in the waiting room of the VEB [Peoples-owned Enterprise] Kraftverkehr.

"In addition to this, worker Merkel from Brand-Erbisdorf flew the DDR [i.e., German Democratic Republic] flag with red, white, and blue bunting this morning. Responsible comrades held discussion with him.

"In Karl Marx Stadt opposite the VEB Weberei-Ausruestung was smeared in white oil paint: 'East Germany mourns for Kennedy.' A similar slogan was placed opposite the Council of Kries Karl Marx Stadt Rural.

"Colleague Naumann of the PGH [i.e., Producers Cooperative for Handicraft] Friseur, Cassietzky Strasse, declared: 'The red did it; there will be a world war for sure.'"

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Suhl, 0600 EST, 23 November

Generally the workers in the (Suhl) Bezirk (district) were of the opinion that President Kennedy was murdered because he was a supporter of peace; because he was one of the first to sign the Moscow (test-ban) treaty; and because he took steps against racial discrimination in the United States. Many workers had arrived at the conclusion that the assassination was carried out by racial fanatics. Among older residents of the Bezirk, the murder of Kennedy was compared to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. There were also those who were worried about the new President, Johnson, and how he will act toward the question of relaxation of tensions, peace, and racial discrimination.

In the last few hours, effects of the class antagonists' activity have already become evident. There has been further discussion to the effect that the murder was committed by Communists. In

*This report is available in summary form only.

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Lauscha, Kreis Neuhaus am Rennweg, several residents stated that the assassin spent many years in the USSR, stayed next in Cuba, and then was sent to the US with the mission to kill Kennedy. It was learned in discussion at the places concerned that these and similar arguments came from Western broadcasts, and such arguments were themselves evidence that these people listened to Western stations.

Wolgast, Kreis, 23 November

"Colleague Ulrich Helts, likewise from the shipyard, technical control, said: 'For me it's incomprehensible that something like this can happen in a country. It's my opinion that this can only be by forces which were against Kennedy's governmental reform.' Hermann Rieck, a welder at the Peene Shipyard and member of the CDU [Christian Democratic Union].

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pointed out: 'It's sorrowful that such things as the assassination of the President occur in the so-called country with the unlimited possibilities.'

"The assassination was discussed right at the start of work-day with the colleagues and comrades from the trade organizations of the Kreis Wolgast enterprises, and it was generally stated that it's shocking that in the USA the President was assassinated and a statesman is pushed aside in such a way. Colleague Regina Dahlke from the trade organization Fotelabor Wolgast especially expressed her extreme indignation over such a thing. Comrade Bruno Wetzel from the Department of Labor of the Veb Holzbau Wolgast is of the opinion that Kennedy had become troublesome for some people because he had to advocate even more the policy of peaceful coexistence, due to public pressure, and on the basis of the peace offensive of the Soviet Union. And this didn't agree with some people.

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That Kennedy took such a stand did not suit some right-wing military circles in the USA, especially with regard to the Cuba question. Now, it is to be feared that, with Johnson taking over as President of the United States, the world at large has to suffer, in that new contacts have to be made again so that the policy of peaceful coexistence can continue."

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