

12/13/68

Memorandum

Re: Followup investigations in Martinsburg, Pa., in regard to CE3067

From: Gary Richard Schommer

Background info: It was decided to hold off this final series of interviews until it could be ascertained that such a series of interviews would not be reported to Julio Fernandez, the subject of the investigation, by friends in Martinsburg.

Interviews:

1. Mrs. Margaret Kathryn Hoover--reinterview: Mrs. Hoover provided 4 items which she had found since my last trip to Martinsburg. They include two used airplane tickets from Altoona to Pittsburg, part of a parent's permission card for driver education at Coral Gables Sr. High School for Walkyria S. Fernandez signed by both of her parents, and part of an application for Pan American Driving School which included the signature of Julio Fernandez Jr. Part of an address is included on the latter: Llendirid, Key Biscayne.

Mrs. Hoover repeated something which had been mentioned at an earlier date but which I had absentmindedly omitted from my earlier memos. One of the items which she sent to Senator Scott which struck her as unusual was a portion of a letter which included the words "now they are on the run."

In response to my question, she reported that the Fernandez's were Catholic and that they went to church in Newry, which has the nearest Catholic church.

Mrs. Hoover reported that Dr. Fernandez had left town twice about the time of the assassination, but wasn't sure how much before the 22nd these brief trips took place.

Mrs. Hoover was extremely helpful in identifying neighbors who might know something about the Fernandezes and arranging interviews with them. I seriously doubt that some of these people would have even let me inside their homes had she not called first. This is a small town and many of the people in it are paranoid about communists.

2. Mrs. Eldie Smith--corner of Walnut and E. Allegheny--SW corner--across the street from the Fernandez's former residence at 400 E. Allegheny: She is very elderly and hard to understand and speak with, but she verified Mrs. Hoover's claim that cars came late at night to visit the Fernandezes prior to the assassination and parked out back of the house. She could provide no other particulars.

3. Mr. Kent Miller and his wife--401 E. Allegheny--NE corner of intersection of Walnut and Allegheny--across the street from the Fernandez's former residence on the SE corner of this junction: They reported that Mr. Fernandez was away a lot the summer before the family left Martinsburg and that he claimed that he was going to college somewhere. They verified Mrs. Hoover's claim of occasional visits of cars late at night, but said that they had only seen them a few times, possibly because they do not have a view of the area behind the house where Mrs. Hoover said that they parked.

He verified Mrs. Hoover's report that the Fernandezes attended the Catholic Church in Newry and also that Mr. Fernandez sent out much mail. Mr. Miller said that he was always at the mailbox mailing letters. (Mrs. Hoover told me that he was often up in his room typing letters.)

Mr. Miller, who provided most of the information, advised that I contact Drew Weirman, now a college student, since he must have known Dr. Fernandez's son Julio. He is under the impression that Julio had organized some sort of student group in

the high school. His father's address is: Mr. Cecil Weirman, 506 E. Allegehny.

He recalls that Mrs. Fernandez got a job in Altoona at a Children's Aid Society of some sort and after that taught at Roaring Springs Junior High.

The daughter had a boyfriend from New York who visited reasonably frequently. None of the guys in town dated her because one of the parents would go out on dates with her and one of the parents would even stay up with she and her date in the home after the date in the old Spanish custom.

The older son talked a lot about communists. The father's English was bad and hard to understand. Mr. Miller finds it hard to believe that he was able to teach in the High School since he is so hard to understand.

Mr. Miller reported that the son was in Martinsburg much of the time and that rumor has it that he is now in Washington with an important job. He was an excellent artist and had an ambition to study art.

Mr. Miller is pretty sure that the Fernandezes left town in August of 1964.

He advised that I interview the school principal just as Mrs. Hoover had since the principal was allegedly one of the Fernandezes best friends.

4. Mr. Leon Kentsinger--308 N. Wall St.--793-2355--High School Principal, Martinsburg Cove Junior High School: According to Mr. Kentsinger, "I knew them twice as well as anyone in town." He reported having given the Fernandezes a great deal of help in getting settled in Martinsburg and in obtaining financing for furniture for their house, etc.

He reported that the people of Martinsburg generally did not like them because they were Cubans, but primarily because they weren't clean and weren't good housekeepers. Mr. Kentsinger passed this off, as did Mrs. Hoover, on the fact that they were from a rich background and had never had to do these things for themselves. He reports generally liking them.

To the best of Mr. Kentsinger's knowledge they had little or no money when they arrived in Martinsburg and when they arrived everyone helped out so they could get settled. They bought second hand furniture and other things on a payment plan, and although when they left Martinsburg they had not yet paid their bills, they did so after they left (gradually).

Both Mr. Kentsinger and Mr. Miller mentioned that the Fernandez boy was intensely interested in cars and that he insisted on driving to school and got into trouble because of many of his antics. Mr. Kentsinger related the fact that the son was wild and out of control to the fact that the two elder children had not been under their parents supervision during part of the time when they were in the process of leaving Cuba and settling in Miami.

He mentioned the daughter's boyfriend and made the same comments as Mr. Miller. Both he and Mr. Miller reported that the boyfriend normally stayed down at the hotel when he came to town. Both were sure that the boyfriend was from New York and that he had New York plates on his car and that he was Cuban. Mr. Kentsinger was of the opinion that the boyfriend had driven them up from Miami, and that he had fled from Cuba in a small boat, and that his father, who is now dead, was a very rich man.

Mr. Kentsinger had heard that the son had taken up art in New York City and that one of the teachers at the school had run into him and he had reported that he was doing well as an artist. He still gets Christmas cards from the Fernandezes in Goshen New York.

According to Mr. Kentsinger, Dr. Fernandez "knew the power of the pen" and would "only resort to force if he was sure of winning." He gave no indications of being anti-JFK

but was critical of US policy towards Cuba under JFK, basically maintaina that the US wasn't doing all it should to help Cubans who were trying to overthrow Castro.

According to Mr. Kentsinger, Fernandez left within two weeks of Aug. 10, 1964. He promised to provide the exact date if he could locate it. He left suddenly, reportedly because he got a better position near N.Y. He was interested in art and theater and wanted to be near New York City because it is a cultural center.

In my presence Mr. Kentsinger contacted Mr. Warren R. Smith, Superintendent of Spring Cove Schools, by phone, and asked him what he could remember about the circumstances of ~~the~~ Fernandez's employment. According to Mr. Smith, a branch of the U.S. Office of Education contacted Smith and asked if they had any positions for Cuban refugees. The Junior High needed a Spanish teacher so he replied in the affirmative. They got the records of one man and decided to take him, but he took another job before they got him. The superintendent then called the bureau and they recommended Fernandez.

Mr. Kentsinger recommended that I contact Mrs. Anna Ashhurst in Martinsburg who speaks Spanish and therefore had occasion to converse with Mr. Fernandez.

Mr. Kentsinger recommended that I contact Mr. Blair Rice, as did Mrs. Hoover, because he was a close friend of the Fernandezes and helped them out many times. Mrs. Hoover had reported that he had picked them up in the morning. Rice formerly lived 5 houses East on Allegheny street from the Fernandezes. He formerly edited the Martinsburg Herald and had written articles about Fernandez. He is currently attached to the Altoona Mirror in Altoona and the Pennsylvania Mirror in State College, Pa. He lives near Bellefonte, Pa., and Mr. Kentsinger promised to get me his address. Mr. Kentsinger reported that Blair Rice was the only other person in Martinsburg who had really befriended the Fernandezes.

As with Mr. Miller, I promised to contact Mr. Kentsinger in the near future and send him copies of my newspaper articles.

5. Donald G. Hoover in the home of his mother, Mrs. Margaret Hoover (his address is RD 2, Martinsburg--793-3683): Don is not too bright and does not have a particularly good memory for much of anything which happened five years ago. He could remember very little about the Fernandezes.

Don had never had any business dealings with the Fernandezes but suggested that I contact Zeke's Moving & Storage who sold them all their furniture.

Don reported that in addition to his mother, Gerald Kauffman and the Whitmers had reported cars coming and going at night, and/or the fact that the blinds were down and the family had not gone out of the house after the assassination. The Whitmers (first name unrecalled) formerly resided in the house next to the Fernandezes, at 402 East Allegheny St., but now live in Harrisburg. According to the Millers, Don and Mrs. Hoover, and Mr. Kentsinger, they would be unable to supply any additional information and would only be useful for further coroboration of what I already knew.

Don can't remember the incident at night reported by Mrs. Hoover in my tape recorded interview with her, but did not dispute the fact that he could have given the Cubans something one evening--he just couldn't remember it.

Don gave a few more pieces of things which were town gossip and which have been reported from a first hand source elsewhere.

6. Mrs. Mame Teeter--owner and manager, Teeter's Hotel & Restaurant--108 E. Allegheny: This is the only hotel in town and is the one designated by the witnesses as the place where Mr. Fernandez and his guests stayed. Mrs. Teeter went over the guest register

with me but we were unable to find the name of any guest from N.Y. who she could not identify as a relative of someone in town or as a hunter. The same was true for Miami

and Florida in general. There was therefore no indication of the identity of any of Mr. Fernandez's guests or of his daughter's boyfriend from N.Y. Most interesting of all was the fact that Mr. Fernandez himself had not signed the registered when he

first arrived in Martinsburg and stayed in the hotel. Mrs. Teeter had assumed that he had, since all of the guests are expected to, but observed that his handwriting was quite flowery and easy to spot and that it was not in the book. It is noteworthy that from her description of the handwriting, it was very likely the handwriting found on the note located by Mrs. Hoover. Mrs. Fernandez's handwriting, and that of the son and daughter were described by those who had seen it as not unusual, but everyone described Dr. Fernandez's as flowery and female-like, very perfect and artistic. According to her, rumor is that the Fernandez girl is studying in Baltimore, MD.

Conclusion: Verification was found for Mrs. Hoover's claim that cars had visited the Fernandezes prior to the assassination. This plus Mr. Fernandez's letter writing suggests the possibility that he is a major figure in the Cuban underground, especially when viewed with regard to his background. All information gathering in Martinsburg which seems feasible has been done, with the possible exception of contacting Mrs. Anna Ashhurst.

It might prove fruitful to pursue the possibility that Julio Fernandez, the son, is in New York studying art, and that the daughter is in Baltimore. In addition, the daughter's boyfriend from New York might be of some interest.

I will write both Mr. Kentsinger and Mr. Miller who have promised to try to provide further information, and will write Mr. Bice for copies of his articles concerning Fernandez's background.