

Dear Alan,

10/23/84

In today's mail with your letter of the 21st is a fat batch from Jim that looks like I should read it promptly, a doctoral candidate is here this week working on my files, so I respond in haste.

It appears that I did not keep Mando's obit, although I thought I had, and I know I wrote Vivian, and I do not find any carbon. I'll try to think of where these could be misfiled. But the obit was in the Post and you should be able to get a copy from its morgue. Made me think of asking for it for you. I have a call in to George Lardner, who may do it.

As I recall, most of what I knew about Abbes came from the former Uruguayan military attache, Gen. Guillermo Muxdoch, a fine guy who, as he left to return home, was so badly abused by those he thought friends I heard he'd turned anti-US. Also his mistress, a woman we kept for too long after he returned to Uruguay without her. Last we heard she was at 2000 F, NW, a Eileen Young, unless she remarried. English. Former actress. Muxdoch is about 84 if still alive, and absent an accident I'd not be surprised if he were. Last address I recall is Abra per Demo (phon). If you'd want to ask him I imagine the military attache would or could know. The general returned to Uruguay before all the terrible violence to become chief of staff of the army. His nickname was "Boo" and we liked and respected him. Both knew and disliked Mando and both referred to Abbes as "rujillo's assassin."

When you interview Vivian, I am certain that Mando was out of the country during the crucial Guatemala period, as I recall about 10 days, and that he was in Venezuela. I do not recall why at the time I was certain that he was involved in that operation. Perhaps from the vagueness with which he referred to where he was or what he was doing.

My retrieval system, if I can dignify it with your words, is primitive and imperfect. As I read the records I obtain I make copies for subject filing, keeping the originals as I receive them for archival deposit. This is essential name and subject filing. Earlier my files just grew, from virtually nothing when I farmed. The CIA was not a central interest, although, before I worked on the assassinations I did start some files for planned writing since abandoned. I've given that material to others, some of my earlier CIA and VN analyses to a young friend who was doing a book on the history of the cold war and the rest to Univ. Wisc., where all my files will go. To a large degree I depend on what is not nearly as dependable as it once was, recollection. What I still recall rapidly impresses Jim, he says, but I assure you I do not have the total recall I once had, almost photographic. In fact, sometimes actually photographic. I had a great time blowing that pompous ass and phony Jim Bishop with complete photographic recall. Upset him so much, on camera, that he spilled his coffee on a fancy jacket he had just bought. He loved it but it looked to me to be appropriate for a Fifth Avenue doorman.

CIA: if you have an reporter friends who might be interested, I'm certain that the tale told about the plane that crashed into the Salvadorean volcano is an improvised cover story, that there was neither Nicaraguan nor airplane-following involvement. If I were to guess I'd not omit infra-red tracking of guerrillas. Among other illegalities.

Sources: for the most part in my work they've not been that important and often enough I could guess. I've never tried to expose any legit. FBI informers and I've told it and DJ when they disclosed by accident. (Once I found them disclosing on purpose.)

On Sas getting approval to talk: I have many such records and to the best of my recollection when permission was granted they reported the conversations. One who spoke to me by phone when I called him, Milton Kaack, who resigned rather than accept cover-Hoover's ass disciplining, reported his version of the conversation.

Because I have no reason to believe he is stupid I do believe he was wovoring his own ass two ways, one by talking to me when he knew I am a writer and two, by telling the FBI of our conversation without reporting any of what interested me and I did ask him about. And he did respond. Paul Rothamel, an SA who became H.L.Hunt's chief of security, spoke to me often but from the disclosed records he did not tell the FBI about our various meetings and conversations except when he gave it something nutty I'd gotten from Garrison. I don't know whether he or the reporting SA got it all balled up. And several who have written books have spoken to me. Joe Schott ("No Left Turns") responded when I wrote him. SAs were even expected to inform on each other, as one told me when I was working with them in about 1938. Warned me, really, and I saw how it worked, if that interests you. I think your reception will vary from former SA to former SA. But I'd assume that if they want to preserve good relations with FBIHQ or cover themselves if they suspect classified matter might be involved, they'd check in first. However, if you come on any who quit the FBI early, not liking it or that kind of life, they might have no reluctance. One former SA once told me how they tricked FBIHQ on informers, pretending them had what they didn't have to keep their counts up, etc.

Jim kept me informed on your illness. I'm probably older and I do not pretend that any treatment is of universal applicability, but from my personal experiences I encourage you to spend time walking daily. That I did this most of my life may have saved my life and I do it daily, with results that please my surgeon and podiatrist enormously. Walking time is also good thinking time. When you spend most of your time sitting and reading or writing it isn't good. For some more vigorous exercise is also best medicine, but almost all of us can walk. the longer without stopping the better. And in bad weather there are always malls. And use the softest soles you can get. My doctor recommends as best what is called Plantation Crepe. If you have tapes to listen to, that goes well with walking, particularly now that incredible mineralized am/fm/cassette sets are available. As Jim can show you if you've not seen them. I average about 4 hours on a single penlight battery on a set he gave me. If you are not doing anything like this you'll find that if you start modestly and increase daily you'll soon be feeling better. Just don't overdo it to begin with.

Abbes again: I have no idea how accurately what he did was reported to me and it was not intended as reporting on him, just conversation. But it is my recollection that wherever he was supposed to be he got around quite a bit. Sent here and there on various missions.

Glad you are getting along. Please excuse the haste and typos.

Best wishes,

October 21, 1984
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Mr. Harold Weisberg
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Dear Harold:

I'm afraid I have been remiss in my correspondence lately, for which many apologies. What with getting increasingly sick from mid-July on, a two-week hospital stay, a convalescence of sorts (mostly regaining strength and getting used to a diabetic's regimen), and preparing to move at the end of next month, probably to Loudoun County, I haven't had much free time. Incidentally, I will keep my present post office box despite the move.

You have been good enough to make various suggestions for the Galindez case research which I will comment on. First, I am aware of what I think were all the local law firms the Trujillo regime employed and, though I have yet to study their activities in detail, I did make complete copies of their Foreign Agents Registration Act filings. As you probably know, some additional light was shed on their work for Trujillo by the investigation the Senate foreign relations committee conducted of foreign government lobbying in the early 1960s.

Second, in mid-summer I made a date to reinterview Nando Castillo's widow Vivian, whom I had not talked to for a year or two, but I had to postpone when I got sick and she too wanted a raincheck because at about the same time she was going into the hospital for a facelift. For various reasons--chiefly my wish to draw up a more complete set of questions for her, my imminent move, and the probability that I will be making family visits in the West for a month or six weeks at the turn of the year--I now contemplate rescheduling the interview for late January or February. If you do have her husband's obituary, I would certainly appreciate receiving a copy.

Third, my information about Johnny Abbes Garcia differs from yours in two respects. In all my research to date I have found no indication that he played any role in the Galindez case during its most important years, 1956-58, probably because he seems to have spent most of that period in Mexico and Central America. I think he returned to Ciudad Trujillo sometime in early 1958, and it was not long thereafter that Trujillo's intelligence apparatus burgeoned into the notorious Servicio de Inteligencia Militar and Abbes became its head. (The FBI, interestingly, constantly confused the pre-SIM intelligence and security milieu of many agencies, in which Arturo Espaillat figured so prominently, with SIM, which represented a consolidation and expansion of Dominican intelligence activities.) And, though Abbes' ultimate fate remains obscure, my scanty though best information is that he ended up running an intelligence operation for Duvalier in Haiti, where he and his family were murdered in a vendetta in mid-1967.

Fourth, you commented in your July 24 letter apropos my telephone chats with James Hall that "[h]is denial that 'former agents are not supposed to talk about their activities as agents.' I know of no case in all the records I've seen where this happened without the agents checking in. And getting an OK. Some have sounded off without permission being recorded and some clearly did not ask ... " Since I want to interview lots of retired agents eventually, I am curious to know whether you have tried to do so in your own research and if so, to what extent and what the results were. I have not approached any yet and so have no idea what proportion of them would seek clearance for interviews about a matter as old as the Galindez case. I can say that I have met no resistance of any kind from active or retired members of the New York Police Department.

A couple of weeks ago the FBI released the last file I had asked for, on Dominican--mostly exile--activities in the United States. It wasn't as badly butchered as my analyst there had led me to believe it would be, though I did notice a continuation of the trend toward ever greater withholding, chiefly in the use of the 7C-D combination. A new wrinkle was the deletion of characterizations of other agencies' documents; e.g., whereas before an inventory worksheet might have said "Ciudad Trujillo dispatch 725," that entry now became merely "State Department document." Though the FBI has many more main files relevant to the Galindez case, I do not intend to request any since among the sixty-three I have been given I am sure I have all the really important ones and the point of diminishing returns has been reached. After so many years of waiting for the FBI to process my requests, I must really get the book out now.

The CIA recently decided it did not want to contest further Judge Greene's decisions as to thirty-eight documents and so released them with the restorations he ordered. Almost without exception the restored passages contained information I either knew already or would uncover during further routine research, and certainly none of them dealt with anything remotely affecting "national security"; I could only conclude that the purpose of the original withholdings was simply to harass and wear me down. The litigation itself is now in abeyance, with an exception. Justice moved for a stay of proceedings in the appeals court to which my attorney and I acceded pending the outcome of Sims in the Supreme Court because in variant ways both Sims and Fitzgibbon deal with sources. The exception is a Rule 60 motion my lawyer will soon submit to Greene covering a waterfront of disguised reconsideration requests. The most important is that the court order the CIA to release informant from two known sources who I recently discovered have died and so no longer need protection; one of the two was of crucial importance.

As I am sure Jim told you, the effort to block HR 5164 failed on September 29 by a vote of 369 to 36. The bill was successfully conferenced a few days later, and I am sure Reagan has signed it by now. The reasons for the failure of the attempted scuttle aren't hard to see: intelligence about the bill's progress, skillfully and ever so quietly managed by the CIA and its little helpers the ACLU, was scant and late; too much reliance was put on the English subcommittee's presumed defense of the FOIA; and the number of people available for the

blocking attempt was risory. As to the last, only three persons were heavily engaged. I had to drop out early on when I started getting really sick and Stephanie Farrior of the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation seemed to slacken off considerably during the final week or ten days, perhaps because NCARL has to maintain reasonable relations with the ACLU, and so that placed the burden entirely on Jim. He did yeoman's work. Other factors were the total uselessness of organizations with a stake in the FOIA such as the American Historical Association and the Society of Professional Journalists, and--probably from incomprehension--the failure of the media to report developments.

In regard to all this and specifically Jim's very well drawn paper about the bill, either I didn't make myself clear to him or he misconstrued what I had to say about mentions of assassination research in the memo. I did not discourage him from referring to such research outright, as he seems to have told you. Instead, I noticed that in his first draft he was paying what appeared to be a disproportionate amount of attention to material the CIA might have about political murders compared to material on other areas, and so I suggested that he mention some of the other areas and strive for greater balance in order to broaden the paper's appeal. That he should initially have stressed assassinations is quite understandable since that topic has been his main interest and chief reason for using the FOIA.

Finally, an important question. It springs from the fact that, through detailed and computer-aided analysis, I have been able to break around 95 percent of the important T-symbols in the FBI's documentation ("important" refers to at most 5 percent of the T-symbols; I have no interest in learning the identities of hotel and airline clerks). Further, tedious comparison of passages about the same person or incident in up to a dozen FBI communications and comparison of that information with non-FBI material lets me fashion a picture of a topic far more detailed than any one passage provides. All this, of course, constitutes an information system and information processing.

The question is: What sort of information system and processing techniques do you use? Have you used computers or word processors? Have you invented any coding methods? Etc., etc. Since you must have given considerable thought to how to deal with large volumes of official documentation, I'd be most interested in what you have to say.

Best regards,



Alan L. Fitzgibbon