



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

WASHINGTON 25, D.C. 20535

May 18, 1964

LEE HARVEY OSWALD
INTERNAL SECURITY - R - CUBA

Re: Dr. Herminio Portell-Vila

It will be recalled that Dr. Herminio Portell-Vila, 4740 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., was interviewed on February 17, 1964, concerning one of his articles which appeared in the December 22, 1963, issue of the Spanish language weekly magazine "Bohemia Libre", published in New York City. The article was entitled "President Kennedy's Strange Assassination." Portell-Vila explained at that time that the material for the above article was obtained from public source material such as American newspapers and magazines, and foreign language newspapers and publications.

As will be recalled, Portell-Vila was a former Professor of History at the University of Havana who came to the United States in 1960 as a political refugee from the Castro Regime.

On May 13, 1964, Dr. Portell-Vila advised that he had received a message from an unknown source within Cuba which indicated in part that the files pertaining to Lee Harvey Oswald's relations in Moscow, Russia, with two Cuban Ambassadors there, were turned over to the Castro brothers on November 24, 1963, just two days after the assassination. The message was dated November 24, 1963, and he received same before the twelfth of December, 1963.

Around the time of its receipt, he gave the original of this part to Mrs. Marinda Arensberg, Secretary of the Cuban Freedom Committee, 1737 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. He believed she passed it on to an unknown Government agency, adding that he believed she had contacts in the State Department.

Portell-Vila said that he did not have a copy of this part of the message but reconstructed it from memory as follows:

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EXPEDIENTE RELACION OSWALDO CON CONCHESO EN
ARCHIVO MARIN HERRERA ENTREGADO POR HERMANOS SIAMENSES.

He interpreted this as follows:

File of relations of Oswald with Concheso (Cuban Embassy in Moscow) from files of Marin Herrera (Ministry of Foreign Relations, Havana), handed today to the Castro brothers.

He pointed out that there may have also been a preposition or two contained in it, but that the above was its contents as far as he could remember. It was pointed out to him that there did not appear to be any mention of the Cuban Ambassadors to Russia as his initial information would indicate. He then said that the names of the two ambassadors were included after "Concheso" in the message. One ambassador was designated by the word Oliva, as he recalled. He could not recall how the name of the other ambassador was designated.

Dr. Portell-Vila then said that his interpretation of the message is based on the prearranged meaning of certain words in the message. According to him, "MARIN HERRERA" was a reference to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Havana, because the building in which the ministry is located was built some 45 or 50 years ago by Mr. Marin Herrera. It had other owners later on until Cuba bought it. "CONCHESO" is a reference to the Cuban Embassy in Moscow because the first Cuban Ambassador to Moscow, in 1942, was a Mr. Concheso. "OSWALDO" is Oswald in Spanish, a Christian name. "HERMANOS SIAMENSES" is a reference to the Castro brothers, Fidel and Paul. He said that the two ambassadors to whom reference is made are Carlos Olivares and Faure Chomon, who were the Cuban Ambassadors in Moscow during the period that Oswald was in Russia.

The above message with his interpretation of same constitutes Portell-Vila's entire information dealing with possible contact of Oswald with Cuban diplomats in Russia. He said that he has not heard of any information in this

respect from any other source, nor of contacts with Cubans by Oswald except what he had read in newspapers or other public source media, or previously reported concerning a speech of Fidel Castro on November 27, 1963, wherein Castro made a comment which suggested that Oswald may have previously made at least one visit to Cuba.

Regarding his source, and as previously pointed out, Portell-Vila said that the actual identity of the source is unknown to him, but the source is part of an underground movement in Cuba. Regarding the source's reliability, Portell-Vila said that the information furnished by the source in the past has been reliable for the greater part. He said that he had made inquiry through means available to him within Cuba concerning the reliability of the source, and was informed that he could consider the informant reliable. He said he could not and would not elaborate further, even under legal process, as to the mechanics used in his obtaining this information, nor concerning the identity of the person attesting to the reliability of the informant, because he feared that disaster would befall those involved.

He explained that this information was probably furnished to him as a person whose background attested that he was anti-Castro, and whose position and contacts in this country, exemplified best by his writing articles for "Bohemia Libre," marked him as a person who could put any information against Castro to use, or place it in the proper official hands for exploitation.

On May 14, 1964, Dr. Portell-Vila exhibited a copy of his article which appears in Spanish in the December 22, 1963, edition of "Bohemia Libre." It is entitled, "El Extrano Asesinato Del Presidente Kennedy" (President Kennedy's Strange Assassination). It starts on page twenty of this magazine. It is the article previously referred to above, and which Dr. Portell-Vila said was the product of research of public source material, and his interpretative analysis of same.

On the same date he also exhibited a copy of his article which appears in Spanish in the February 2, 1964, issue of the magazine "Bohemia Internacional," a Spanish language magazine which is printed in Venezuela, according to Portell-Vila. It is entitled, "CAMBIO DE DISFRAS" (Change of Disguise) and starts on page sixteen. It pertains generally to Oswald and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee aspect of the assassination. Again, according to Portell-Vila, as in the case of his previous article on the assassination, the material is the result of research and interpretative analysis on his part of public source material where Oswald is concerned, with the exception of a brief reference to Oswald being in contact with the previously named Cuban Ambassadors in Moscow, Russia. The message from the unknown source in Cuba previously described is the source for this reference in the article.

With respect to this reference in the article, and by way of explanation, it is to be noted that a translation of Dr. Portell-Vila's article appearing in the February 2, 1964, issue of "Bohemia Internacional," is contained in the report of Special Agent James J. O'Connor, dated May 8, 1964, at Miami, Florida, under the Lee Harvey Oswald caption. Therein, Portell-Vila, on the topic of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, stated in part:

During the course of 1960-1961, he was a visiting professor at the University of Florida in Gainesville, where there was a branch of the "Fair Play" in operation. It boasted that it had 21 branches in the United States and four in Canada, with a membership of 8,000. The New Orleans branch was not among them at the time, because it was not formed until two years later, when Lee Harvey Oswald, the presumed assassin of President Kennedy, returned to the United States after his contacts with the Communist Cuban Ambassadors in Moscow, Faure Chomon and Carlos Olivares. Concerning this last-mentioned fact, the communist dictatorship of Cuba says nothing, although the Kremlin has turned over to the United States a file with the documents referring to Oswald in the Soviet Union.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR



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This is the part of the article to which Fortell-Vila was referring above, the source of which is the message from his unknown source in Cuba.

It is also indicated in the same translation of his article, that he further states that:

Besides, the information from the anti-communist underground movement which operates right under the nose of Raul Roca Garcia, in the Ministry of State in Havana, shows that Oswald's relations with the "Fair Play for Communist Cuba" began before July, 1963, when he returned from the Soviet Union, and that they had been sponsored by Castro's diplomatic agents in Moscow, at the time Oswald was there.

As previously pointed out, Fortell-Vila in his interview of May 13, 1964, indicated that his only information in this regard was the message from his source in Cuba, and on May 14, 1964, he stated that the article expressed his interpretative analysis of this information.

It is noted that the translation also states that:

During his speech of November 27, 1963, at the University of Havana, when Castro said "the first time that Oswald was in Cuba", his tongue was under the influence of "Feralta" cognac, and he revealed something which is very important.

It will be recalled in this respect that Fortell-Vila advised during his February 17, 1964, interview that he read in a November 29, 1963, publication that in a speech on November 27, 1963, Fidel Castro, whether through a slip of the tongue or as the result of the influence of liquor, made a comment which suggested that Oswald may have previously made at least one visit to Cuba. He conjectured that this trip of Oswald could have taken place while he was in Mexico last year or perhaps while he was in Russia. He said at the time he had no additional information in this regard.

May 14, 1964

BY COURIER SERVICE

Honorable J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
The President's Commission
200 Maryland Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Rankin:

Reference is made to my letter of May 8, 1964, which advised that Dallas Police Chief Jesse E. Curry denied that he ever received a letter from the Justice Department and that he had been requested by any official of the FBI not to arrest Oswald or Ruby, as alleged in an article from the May 17, 1964, issue of the "National Enquirer."

By letter dated May 13, 1964, from the Deputy Attorney General we were advised that a check of the files of the Department of Justice discloses no reference to an alleged letter from a high official of the Justice Department to Dallas Police Chief Jesse E. Curry nor any reference that an FBI official was asked to request the Dallas Police not to arrest Oswald or Ruby.

This completes our inquiry in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

COMMISSION EXHIBIT No. 2956