

Liebengood

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fred Thompson
FROM: Howard Liebengood
DATE: July 12, 1973
SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH ELIAS CHAJET

I interviewed Elias Chajet, 48 years old, 803 82nd Street, Miami, Florida, at his home between 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on July 11, 1973. Chajet was born in Cuba of Lithuanian parents and is Jewish. He is an extremely obese, nervous chain smoker who speaks softly with a Cuban-and-New York combined accent. He first came to the United States in 1946 but returned to Cuba for several profitable years as a jeweler. He finally returned to the U.S. to stay in 1954. He has been a U.S. citizen since 1959. He has a brother working with the Chilean Embassy (job title unknown). Chajet does not look well. His nerves are shot, he has high blood pressure, and a terrible cough. He takes 250 mg. of aldament four times a day, and apresoline and hydroxiene (?) once daily for blood pressure. Despite his infirmities, he is very credible in his demeanor. He is a registered Democrat but actively supported Nixon (did canvass work in the Cuban Miami community). *Breed,*

Chajet has known Barker for ten years and Sturgis for two years. During the latter time, he has been Sturgis' closest friend in the Miami Cuban cult. He first met Sturgis shortly after Chajet founded CHIPP (Citizens' Help for International Political Prisoners) in May of 1971. Sturgis was introduced to Chajet by Kaiser. Both Kaiser and Sturgis were active in CHIPP.

Chajet states that he is a humanitarian, not a soldier (a fact corroborated by the other Cubans I talked with), and that he is dedicated to CHIPP, an organization designed to raise funds and petitions for Communist political prisoners around the world. (Kaiser advises that he and Sturgis are militants who, unknown

to Chajet, intended to eventually divert CHIPP appropriations to fund another Cuban revolution.) Sturgis performed an intelligence and security function with CHIPP. Chajet feels that he was about to succeed in uniting the Jewish and Cuban grievances against Communism but was thwarted in November of 1971 by a rival Cuban faction (the Humberto Medrano movement). Chajet and his family were terrorized and their home bombed. Chajet reported this to the FBI, and it should be a matter of record with them.

He was aware of Sturgis' soldier-of-fortune reputation at the time that they met. Nonetheless, they became extremely close friends and daily companions. Sturgis kept Chajet informed of virtually all his activities, and they constantly speculated that these activities would lead to a large amount of funds to enable CHIPP to succeed and Sturgis to recapture Cuba. In early 1972 Sturgis spoke of a project he was involved in to get his hands on money coming out of Cuba that was supposed to be used for pro-Castro purposes, but it was instead being diverted by undercover agents for use against Castro Cuba (this involved the boats of Angel Ferrar and Pedro Martinez). Shortly thereafter, Sturgis commenced talking about "the big project." With regard to "the big project," Sturgis advised Chajet that his boss was E. Howard Hunt, a high-up in the White House. Chajet got the impression from Sturgis that he had worked for Hunt for some time.

At the time of the mining of Hai Phong Harbor, Chajet and Sturgis organized a Cuban caravan in Miami in support of the President (a 300-truck demonstration). At this time Sturgis was making frequent trips to Washington and active with the Veterans of Fort Jackson group. (I am advised that Cuban infiltrators were trained at Fort Jackson for the Bay of Pigs investigation and since.) Chajet got the impression that Barker was involved in the Washington trips in some way. Chajet knew about Sturgis' activities in connection with the demonstration at Hoover's funeral. He learned this from Sturgis and from Angel Ferrar (a veteran of Fort Jackson). When Sturgis came back from the Hoover funeral, he first stated to Chajet that he had been working for Hunt and mentioned that Hunt knew Mitchell. Sturgis never explained precisely what the big project was to Chajet, but he was most excited that it was something very big. Sturgis said he had CIA and White House backing, and at one time mentioned that an FBI man named Baldwin was assisting him.

About the time of Hoover's funeral, Sturgis bragged about having the assistance of the CRP security coordinator, McCord, in the big project. Sturgis made at least four trips to Washington in the three months preceeding the Watergate arrests.

Chajet met Hunt downstairs in Barker's office one week after the Hai Phong Caravan. Sturgis and Chajet had walked into the building and seen Hunt and Barker in the downstairs area, whereupon Sturgis introduced Chajet to Hunt as the "big boss." Sturgis bragged a little while later that other big shots were coming to Miami from the White House. I questioned Chajet on names, and the names he could remember were McCord, E. Colson, and Mitchell.

Sturgis never worked hard at his employment. He changed jobs several times and was disinterested. He had serious financial needs, i.e., a 17-year old daughter with a drug problem and in the HIR drug program, as well as an aged mother who lived with him and his family. Nonetheless, in pre-Watergate 1972, Sturgis always had plenty of money. After Watergate, while Sturgis was home on bond, he also had lots of money. At one time he indicated that Carlos Prio (I believe a former president of Cuba) and an associate, Cristobal Mayo, were raising money for his defense. He also heard Barker and Sturgis talking about what a great fellow Artime was, and he (Chajet) assumed that Artime was also supplying them with funds. After Watergate Sturgis had no known contact with Martinez or Gonzalez but saw Barker regularly.

Chajet said that Sturgis had known Anderson for a long time and idealized Anderson. As Chajet understood it, Sturgis was born in the U.S. but went to Cuba to fight for Castro and, as a result, lost his citizenship. He had contact with Anderson during the revolution, and Anderson later assisted him, along with Senator Smathers, in regaining his citizenship. Sturgis spoke of Anderson often--nearly every day--and talked with him regularly on the telephone. Chajet remembers that Sturgis told him in July of 1971 when they were active in CHIPP that "Anderson owed him some favors." Sturgis has constantly spoken of Anderson as a source of assistance with CHIPP.

Chajet said that he knows that Sturgis discussed the big project with Anderson because he remembers Sturgis telling him months before Watergate that "Anderson had promised him full press

cooperation with the big project." Chajet admitted to being puzzled at this and just thought Anderson was looking for information. Chajet is inclined to believe that Sturgis was in constant communication with Anderson until he left for the Watergate operation. Chajet indicated that on the Wednesday before Watergate, Sturgis asked Chajet to take him to the airport for a trip to Washington. Chajet took him to the airport on Saturday at 12:00 noon, he thinks. Before Sturgis got on the airplane, he was excited and told Chajet that as a result of this trip they would now have enough money to swing CHIPP and to liberate Cuba, indicating that he now had support from the "higher-ups" at the White House.

Chajet indicated that he has heard information he believes from the newspapers that Sturgis inadvertently ran into Anderson at the airport upon arriving in Washington on the day of the Watergate. He has also heard the story that Anderson appeared at Sturgis' bail-bonding hearing and believes that Sturgis told him that Anderson visited him in jail.

After the Watergate, both Frank and his wife were in contact with Anderson. Sturgis' wife had told Chajet that Anderson offered money to her while Sturgis was in jail the first time and offered to find her a place to live in Washington if she wanted to come up. Chajet knows that Anderson and Sturgis had for a long time talked about doing a semi-fictitious life story of Sturgis as a soldier of fortune, and understands from Sturgis that New York ghost writers visited him in Florida after the Watergate with regard to this book. He remembers that Sturgis got mad because all the writers wanted to talk about was Watergate. Chajet thinks that the writers were down there about one month before Sturgis came back to go to jail for the last time.

At the time of the Republican Convention in August of 1972, Sturgis asked Chajet to drive him to the Dupont Plaza so that he could see Jack Anderson. Chajet waited in the car, and Sturgis was inside about twenty minutes. This was at approximately 10:00 a.m. When Sturgis returned to the car, he had in his hand a fold of \$50 bills, crisp and new, approximately one inch high. He felt them as he put them in his wallet and said to Chajet, "Well, my trip wasn't for nothing." Chajet estimates that there were at least 15 to 20 bills in his hand.

After the Watergate operation, Sturgis was always bragging and seemed proud of the fact that they were caught. Chajet got the

impression from Sturgis that Anderson had indicated this would provide better material for his book. Sturgis never mentioned anybody sabotaging the Watergate operation, but did state that the other guys were stupid for leaving the tape on the door. Macho (Barker) was stupid for using his notary seal. Sturgis was very optimistic about spending no more than two months in jail and was not concerned about Gernstein. Sturgis indicated that Anderson had said he would testify for him if necessary. Chajet remembers hearing Sturgis mention Anderson's name to Barker but doesn't remember the context or the time period involved.

Shortly before Sturgis returned to go to jail for the last time, Chajet detected a rift in the Anderson - Sturgis relationship. Sturgis had no longer discussed Anderson daily, and when Chajet brought his name up Sturgis said he "didn't want to see that bastard no more." Chajet assumed that the book had fallen through and that this was the problem. Chajet has not seen Sturgis since he left the last time, but he has talked to his wife once. Mrs. Sturgis only said that Frank "wanted this" and that she was behind him.

Chajet indicates that Sturgis was also a close friend of the chairman of the Young Democrats, a Greek (name unknown). Chajet and Sturgis visited the Young Democrats' office on West Flayer Street on several occasions after the Watergate break-in and before.

Chajet describes Sturgis as a "first-class mercenary" who would sell anything, including information, for money, as long as it did not conflict with his desire to liberate Cuba. He said that Sturgis was a big believer in Anderson and was convinced that Anderson would never double-cross the United States. He is certain that Sturgis kept Anderson informed on all aspects of the Watergate. Now Chajet feels that Anderson double-crossed him and that Sturgis must surely know this.

HL/go
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