

What Happened After Missing Trio Disappeared

(From The Student Voice)

Philadelphia, Miss.—Civil rights workers are helping bolster a force of federal officers in a search for three missing men, a search some rights workers say is not as concentrated as newspapers report.

The three men — Mickey Schwerner, 24, a CORE worker, and Andrew Goodman, 20, a summer volunteer, both white, from New York City, and James Cheney, 21, Negro, from Meridian—left Meridian, 35 miles away, at 9 o'clock Sunday morning. They were stopped in Philadelphia at 4 p.m., given a speeding ticket, spent six hours in jail, and released at 10 that evening. They have not been seen or heard from since.

Civil rights workers complained that agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation did not arrive on the scene until at least 20 hours after they were first notified the three men were missing.

Called Three Times

H. F. Helgesen, a Jackson FBI agent, was notified at 10 p.m. Sunday the three were missing. He told the Jackson office to keep him informed of what was happening.

At 10:30, a Justice Department lawyer named Schwelb was called in Meridian by COFO workers. Jackson called Schwelb again at 11, but he had not left his room. At 12 that evening, the Jackson office called Schwelb again and gave him the license number of the missing car and requested an investigation.

Schwelb said the FBI was not a police force and that he was not sure a federal offense had occurred. He was told provisions in the U. S. Code gave the FBI authority to intervene in civil rights cases. He insisted he did not have any authority. The office called FBI agent Helgesen again, and the Mississippi Highway Patrol.

At one o'clock Monday morning (one hour ahead of Mississippi time) June 22, the Atlanta SNCC office called John Doar of the

Justice Department in Washington, D. C. He said they were concerned and would look into the case.

Between 3 and 4 that morning, Doar was called again by Atlanta SNCC. He repeated he would see what the Justice Department could do. Doar was called by Atlanta SNCC a third time on Monday morning and said then "I have invested the FBI with the power to look into the matter."

New Information Supplied

At 7:30 that morning, information about the traffic arrest of the three, secured from the jailer's wife in Philadelphia, was given to the Jackson FBI office. They said they would relay this information to FBI agent Helgesen.

New information about the arrest secured from a white Philadelphian was given to agent Helgesen at 8:30 Monday. He said he could not act until the New Orleans FBI office contacted him.

At 9 Monday morning, a fifth call was made to the Jackson office of the Highway Patrol. At 9:15, Attorney Doar was called in Washington from Atlanta. At 11, Helgesen was called and given information that the three had still been in jail at 9 the night before, and had been beaten, but not seriously.

Helgesen said the beating "put new light on the FBI's role. He said he would take "necessary action." He was called again at noon Monday, June 22. He said he had called the New Orleans FBI office and not received instructions to investigate.

Given No Instructions

At 12:15, the Atlanta SNCC office reported they had spoken with FBI agent Mayner in New Orleans who had received no instructions from Washington. At 1 Monday afternoon, the Meridian COFO office was told James Farmer of CORE had spoken with FBI agent DeLoach in Washington, as well as Presidential assistant Lee White and Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall. An attorney for the family of one of the missing boys called Meridian to report Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy had been contacted.

At 1:40, Meridian COFO reported they had made attempts to contact local Air Force bases to institute an air search but had been unsuccessful. Atlanta SNCC called John Doar, but could not reach him immediately.

A white Philadelphia contact who had reported the beating said the FBI had not contacted him by 2:10 Monday afternoon. The CORE office in New York attempted to reach the Department of Defense to institute an air search. Stormy weather developed later that afternoon.

At 2:45, Atlanta SNCC reported calls had been made to Burke Marshall and John Doar. Neither could be immediately reached by phone. At 2:55, it was reported that reporters had been allowed to go through the Philadelphia jail and were satisfied the three workers were not there.

By 3:30, Doar called Atlanta SNCC. He said the Mississippi Highway Patrol had put out an "all points alert" and that the sheriff of Neshoba County and the FBI were searching. The sheriff claimed the three were last seen heading south on Route 19 to Meridian.

Asked Five Times

At 8 Monday evening, FBI agent Helgesen called. He was asked five times if the FBI was investigating the disappearance. Each time he referred the questioner to the Justice Department in Washington.

At 8:45, Meridian COFO reported they called John Doar in Washington but could not reach him. Finally, at 9:30 that evening, newspaper reporters called to Meridian from Philadelphia to report that four FBI agents were there.

At 10 p.m., United Press International reported that Edwin Guthman, public relations man for the Justice Department, said the FBI had been ordered into the case to ascertain whether the trio was being held against their will or if their civil rights had been violated.

At 10:00 p.m., FBI agents John Proctor and Harry Saison were in the Meridian COFO office.

At 1 Monday afternoon, the Meridian COFO office learned New York CORE had spoken to Lee White, special assistant to the President. They were told that Meridian Naval Air Station was available to the FBI for their search. Some Meridian citizens with private planes were considering conducting their own search.

At 2:10 p.m. the Naval Air Station in Meridian said as far as they knew no air search was being conducted.

Helicopter Put In Use

At 2:50 p.m. an attorney for the Goodman family reported the Goodmans and Mr. Schwerner, accompanied by Representative Williams Fitts Ryan of New York, had spent an hour with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy told them all authorities were working on the case and that Navy helicopters were searching the area.

At 3:55, a Meridian radio station broadcast that the missing car was found, charred and burned. At 5:15, Meridian COFO learned that Mr. and Mrs. Goodman, Mr. Schwerner, and two Congressmen met for 20 minutes with President Johnson. He assured them the Federal government was doing all it could.

At 5:25, a Meridian radio station reported a Navy helicopter was being used in the search. At 6 p.m., a Jackson radio station had sent two plains-clothesmen into the area to assist the FBI.

Dulles In Jackson

A report from the parents meeting with Attorney General Kennedy said they told him what was needed was not just investigation but protection. At 8 p.m. President Johnson called Mr. Goodman at home in New York and told him he had ordered the FBI and Defense Department to "comb the countryside."

At 3 Thursday afternoon, June 25, Allen Dulles, former CIA head, met in Jackson with SNCC Executive Secretary James Forman, NAACP worker Charles Evers, NAACP state president Aaron Henry and several others. They made a strong plea for federal protection of civil rights workers.

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