

FBI files reveal new civil liberties spy

FBI files of Feb 16th, 1958 reveal that ACLU General Counsel Morris Ernst was dropped from the special correspondents list, and officially declared 'persona non grata' at FBI headquarters. Helen Gandy, J. Edgar Hoover's personal secretary wrote the following note after giving Ernst a cursory response: "Ernst formerly was on the special correspondents list but has been deleted from all mailing lists on instructions from Mr. Tolson. It will be recalled he was one of two attorneys hired by the Dominican Republic to conduct an "investigation" into the disappearance of Dr. Jesus de Galindez." Tellingly, Helen Gandy puts quotation marks around "investigation." Even the clerical help are deriding Ernst's claim of the role he played in the de Galindez murder.

Ms. Gandy's correspondence leaves no doubt that the break in the relationship between Ernst and Hoover was over the de Galindez murder and nothing else. Ernst would start badmouthing Hoover in his private conversations, and it would get back to Hoover immediately. Morris Ernst represented Catherine Taaffe, a representative of the Sugar Institute, and organization of Cuban sugar growers opposed to Castro. Ernst had used his close relationship with Hoover to drum up legal work for his private law firm. The work, in reality was lobbying, and Mrs. Taaffe wanted Ernst to keep a cozy relationship going with the FBI, State Department, CIA, etc. Ernst told Mrs. Taaffe that "Mr. Hoover was under wraps" and that "any whore or pimp off the street can get in to see Hoover but I (Ernst) couldn't".

Unbeknown to Ernst, Mrs. Taaffe never trusted Ernst and had established her own contacts at the FBI. Mrs. Taaffe is described as an informant for the FBI. She reported Ernst's comments that very day. Hoover would know what Ernst said that very afternoon. Other FBI documents indicate that the Sugar Institute was paying large fees to Ernst, but Mrs. Taaffe was convinced that he was not earning his money, but rather, just throwing Hoover's name around. Mrs. Taaffe also let FBI agents know that she was sitting with Ernst when he had talked with the FBI New York Office earlier in the day. Ernst had lost all discretion. Now that Mrs. Taaffe knew Ernst had no clout with Hoover, their relationship was winding down.

The new civil liberties spy would be Irv Ferman, the Director of the ACLU Washington, D.C. Chapter. Ferman was willing to be Hoover's conduit, but Hoover was yet to find Ferman trustworthy. Ernst would use his friendship with Hoover to make his enemies lives miserable, but it is likely that Hoover knew that Ernst's information always had to be checked out. Hoover was well aware of Ernst's long relationship with some of the most unsavory characters in journalism, and the FBI had just witnessed Drew Pearson planting a completely false account of the disappearance of de Galindez for his old dinner companion, Morris Ernst.

Ferman did not have the baggage of Ernst, and was very enthusiastic about his new relationship with J. Edgar Hoover. Ferman had championed a closer working relationship between the ACLU and the FBI, and now was the point man on the project. He was identified as an anti-communist within the ACLU, so he would be safe for Hoover to deal with. However, the rank and file ACLU would never know how close the relationship was; a ticklish point for any civil liberties organization. Ernst had represented so many interests in Washington, from communists to corporatists. If you had money to pay a retainer, Morris Ernst was your man.

FBI files of 11/21, 1958 reveal that Irving Ferman, head of the ACLU office in Washington, D.C. is providing intelligence to the FBI regarding Judge David Bazelon, who is desirous of an appointment to the Supreme Court. Ferman warns Hoover that the Democrats may be trying to replace Hoover as FBI Director, and blames it on the Americans for Democratic Action. The ADA, a very reputable liberal group with no apparent connections to the extreme left or extreme right, and led by solid liberals such as John Kenneth Galbraith, are being spied upon by the new spy in town, Irv Ferman. The ADA was always sensitive about the ACLU, primarily because it had an anti-communist reputation, and was far more credible than the ACLU. It had solid liberal credentials, and no apparent financial connections to the extreme left and right. It did not have the connections to J. P. Morgan that the ACLU had, nor any known connections to Stalin.

Ferman also warns the FBI to keep an eye on Senator William Proxmire, whose "political counselor appears to be David Kappelman." Ferman has indicated that Kappelman has suggested to Senator William Proxmire(D-WI) that he court the favor of Fulton J. Lewis, Jr. Lewis was a well known newscaster with no particular bias other than exposing government malfeasance. Who needs enemies on the right when you can dispose of credible liberal groups who might compete with the ACLU; a civil liberties conglomerate. The National Lawyers Guild was known as a more liberal civil liberties group than the ACLU. However, civil libertarians would never know what FBI files reveal. The National Lawyers Guild was founded by Morris Ernst. While they appeared to be competition in the civil liberties field, the same crowd controlled both organizations. They would have the same strange connections to the extreme right and extreme left; the same people, a narrow band of WASPs, whose family ties would be linked to J.P. Morgan and Stalin.

Ferman's warning of the influence of David Kappelman on Proxmire appears almost anti-Semitic, and an invitation to the FBI to check his background. Perhaps he wasn't Jewish. But you better check him out. The ACLU would repeatedly be involved in splitting ethnic and religious groups; a favorite tactic of the British Empire. The smearing of very liberal people as Nazis often gave the impression that the charges were coming from the Jewish community, when in fact, very few of the charges originated in the Jewish community. Virtually all the charges of Hitlerism came from White Anglo Saxon Protestants connected to an aging British Empire; the same group that had avoided fighting Hitler at every turn. It would be America's job to do that. It would be America's job to fight the Japanese at the same time. It was a world war for America only.

Irv Ferman would also indicate in FBI files that he would be in New York for the next several weeks and would try to determine what Morris Ernst's current attitude was towards the FBI. He now is spying on Morris Ernst, who he states "likes to talk a lot." Ferman assures the FBI that he would report back to the FBI when he returns to Washington, and further repeats his assertion that the Americans for Democratic Action are out to get the FBI. It appears that the FBI agents don't fall for the story at all, and simply believe that the ACLU is out to smear a competitor for liberal affection.