

## FBI files reveal Bobby Kennedy wiretaps info forwarded to ACLU General Counsel

In a letter dated June 27th, 1969, FBI files indicate that J. Edgar Hoover had secretly provided a copy of the wiretap authorization Hoover had been given by Attorney General Robert Kennedy. This clandestine passing of documents is surprising, only because of its timing. Hoover had been secretly passing information to ACLU General Counsel Morris Ernst for decades, but the two had fallen out as friends for decades. It apparently was time to renew old friendships.

By secretly passing conclusive evidence that Bobby Kennedy had approved all his wiretaps, Hoover put himself in a secure position to defend himself against anti-war critics, and critics within the civil rights movement. Hoover had been stung before by presidents who had initiated wiretaps, then conveniently blamed Hoover. During FDR's time, the very liberal economics editor of *The New Republic*, John Flynn, would rip into liberals for being naïve when heaping scorn on Hoover, when it was obvious that the wiretap and snooping was being ordered by the White House. FDR would pick up the phone and get Flynn fired, and insure that he was never again hired by any New York publication. Flynn would re-emerge in the 1950's as a conservative scourge, writing for William Buckley's *National Review*. Conservative publications were the only outlet he had.

Hoover's need to connect again with Ernst seems to indicate that Hoover was feeling uncomfortable with his relationship with RFK. Hoover and Kennedy shared one thing in common; distrust of Communists and distrust of liberals. Arthur Schlesinger would document RFK's deep distrust of liberals and their connections to Stalin's agents in America. It was the liberal intelligentsia of New York that smeared his father in London in WW II as a "Nazi lover" because of his criticisms of Great Britain's unwillingness to fight. Joseph Kennedy had planned to run for president, and the liberal smear campaign ended those dreams. Kennedy passed those dreams to his children. And now he had witnessed his brother murdered by a man connected to the Russian embassy in Mexico City; a man who had visited Moscow in an era when it was very difficult to get a visa there. RFK himself was murdered by Sirhan Sirhan, a man who had trained in Palestinian training camps funded by the Soviets.

It was Robert F. Kennedy himself who was Democratic counsel to the McCarthy Committee; a man who had spent a year of his life pouring over thousands of government documents indicating who was a communist, or simply a fellow traveler, and who was an actual agent of the KGB. RFK was hardly a neutral observer; he knew who the spies were. He must have been stunned when the media circus surrounding the McCarthy Hearings seemed to indicate no Communists were found. It must have been reminiscent of the Edward R. Murrow broadcasts from London which personified a wholesome English people and government, and personifying Ambassador Joseph Kennedy as 'the root of all evil'. The truth was much clearer. England had been bombing German civilians in night carpet bombing since June of 1940, and German generals were mystified why Hitler would not attack England. When the Germans finally retaliated with the bombing of London in September, it became front page news. It became obvious that Hitler did not want to draw England into the battle. He certainly did not refrain from bombing on humanitarian grounds.

When CBS News led the attack on McCarthy, it obscured the issues of who was a clear and present danger, and who was not. It certainly must have been déjà vu for RFK; he must have been thinking of what he father went through with CBS News during the war. It was well known in Washington that Joe Kennedy had arranged Bobby's appointment to the McCarthy Committee. It was to be his coming out party; his chance in the sun. It would turn out to be a scorching desert. He would spend his time on television with his head down, leafing through papers. It did not matter that his research was outstanding. There would be no political points earned here.

The opening of KGB files by the Soviets had resulted in some stunning revelations; the number of spies and their high positions in American society make it look like RFK was scratching the surface; and he was. KGB files reveal that Robert Allen, Editor of the Christian Science Monitor was a paid Soviet spy. Allen was also Drew Pearson's writing partner in the most successful newspaper column in Washington, *The Washington Merry Go Round*. American Ambassador in Germany, Dodd, had his son and daughter spying for the Russians; Everything he knew was known by the Russians instantly. Pearson was a favorite of OSS spy chief "Wild Bill" Donovan. Further, Duncan Lee, his executive assistant, was also a Russian spy. The very top branches of FDR's administration was an absolute sieve. There were no secrets in Washington during WW II.

Despite the public perception that Hoover and RFK were at odds on wiretapping and Soviet spying, they were very much on the same page, but Hoover may have felt that liberal pressure on RFK in the political arena would lead to a future split. Hoover's release of a copy of the confidential authorization to ACLU Counsel Ernst came at a time when they had not spoken in years. In prior years Ernst and Hoover had dined for years on Friday night at the Stork Club in New York City. Walter Winchell used to join them. It is not clear what led to their falling out, although the timing of their split was exactly the period in 1958 when Ernst was trying desparately to smear Prof. Galindez who was presumably killed by Dictator Rafael Trujillo. It may come as a shock to civil libertarians that the highest legal counsel at the ACLU was having dinner for years with the FBI Director.