

Why Ruby's Family Fired Belli

By THEO WILSON

(Who covered the Ruby trial for THE NEWS)

Minutes after Jack Ruby's jurors found him guilty of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald with malice and sentenced him to death, one of his sisters, weeping, cried out to me in the crowded, noisy Dallas courtroom: "He didn't have a fair trial!"

This same sister, black-haired Eileen Kaminsky of Chicago, with Jack's other sister and brothers, asked Melvin Belli yesterday to withdraw from the case as chief defense counsel and went to Houston to hire Texas' most famous lawyer, Percy Foreman, to replace him.

Why?

The stated reason was Belli's blasts at Dallas justice, the court, the jurors, the judge, the district attorney, and the state of Texas — blasts which the millionaire San Francisco lawyer started as soon as the verdict was read and which he continued for three days.

That, according to somebody very close to the case in Texas, is only half of it.

Appeals Court Is Elected

"They put the pressure on Jack, and he is an easy guy to pressure," this source told THE NEWS yesterday in a phone call from Texas. "They got the message to him, he'd be better off without Belli."

"Who is 'they'?"

"The district attorney's office, the sheriff's office," THE NEWS was told. "You have to remember that the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals is an elected court. The three judges are elected."

It is to this court that Ruby's attorneys, Foreman, Phil Bursleson of Dallas and Joe Tonahill of Jasper, Tex., eventually will take their appeal, citing more than 30 alleged reversible errors.

The Texas informant said: "Jack and his family were told that Belli was alternating every-



(Associated Press Wirefoto)
Melvin Belli in Mexico City.

body, even those who have sympathy for him. They were told that Belli, as an outsider criticizing Texas, was making enemies for himself—and for Jack. And that is why Jack personally signed the letter in which Belli was asked to pull out."

It Began in Court

Belli began his tirade in Judge Joe B. Brown's courtroom Saturday while the stunned Ruby and his stone-faced jurors were still there, and while the prosecutor

wedged on narrow hard benches behind the counsel tables.

He "thanked" the jury for its "victory for bigotry." He called Dallas "a piece of Russia." He told us the trial was "the greatest railroading kangaroo court of law in history."

He described District Attorney Henry Wade as a hog-caller and told me: "He (Wade) called the hogs (the jury) and they came."

Threat to Quit ABA

All through the trial Belli told us he was going to resign from the American Bar Association "as soon as I get time to sit down and write a letter."

Yesterday ABA spokesmen said Belli's remarks about the verdict were in flagrant disregard of the legal profession's code of ethics.

In Mexico City, an unrepentant Belli said that "public opinion and my fellow attorneys should not judge me until my handling of the trial in all technical details is generally known."

As for getting thrown out of the ABA, Belli said that was something "like losing your membership in the Book of the Month Club."

- Tolson
- Belmont
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- DeLoach
- Evans
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

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- The Washington Post and Times Herald
 - The Washington Daily News
 - The Evening Star
 - New York Herald Tribune
 - New York Journal-American
 - New York Mirror
 - New York Daily News
 - New York Post
 - The New York Times
 - The Worker
 - The New Leader
 - The Wall Street Journal
 - The National Observer
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