

Return to EW

FBI Probing Newsman Critical of President

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Acting on orders from the White House, the FBI has been investigating veteran CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr.

The investigation started Aug. 20 in the midst of one of Schorr's frequent clashes with White House aides over the quality and accuracy of his reporting.

FBI agents called on Richard Salant, president of CBS; Bill Small, CBS Washington bureau chief; Fred Friendly, former president of CBS, and even neighbors of Schorr, who lives in Georgetown, and those of his brother, Alvin, who lives in New York.

In each instance, agents said that Schorr was being considered for a "position of trust and confidence" in the government. An agent told Salant, who was suspicious of the reason for the probe, that Schorr had been proposed for a "very important job" and the White House had asked the FBI to expedite the investigation.

Most of the interviews took place during the weekend of Aug. 20.

No job offer was ever made to Schorr, but a White House official said last night that Schorr "was under considera-

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tion, among others, for a high position in the environmental area. The consideration was terminated, not for any reason that turned up in the FBI investigation, but for other reasons with respect to him and the position for which he was being considered."

The official refused to identify the environmental post.

"I now believe there was never a job to be offered," Schorr said yesterday. "Out of curiosity mostly, I have checked every source who might know without the slightest indication that I was ever considered for any post."

It was learned that the White House indeed sought from the FBI a field investigation on Schorr and, as is usual in these cases, indicated it was because Schorr was under consideration for employment in a substantial government post.

The investigation started three days after President Nixon made a speech to the Knights of Columbus in New York in which he indicated he strongly supported financial aid to parochial schools despite political and constitutional barriers. On the night



DANIEL SCHORR
... no job offered

of the speech, Schorr reported the President caught Catholic educators and even some HEW officials by surprise because they didn't know of any programs or initiatives in progress that could accomplish the President's apparent goal.

The following day, Aug. 18, Schorr was called by Al Snyder, an aide to White House communications director Herbert G. Klein, and asked to a meeting "to get all the facts" on White House initiatives on parochial schools.

Present were presidential speechwriter Pat Buchanan, Terry Bell, then an assistant commissioner of education, and Henry Cashen, an aide to Charles Colson, special counsel to the President.

Schorr said the quartet reeled off information so rapidly that he could not absorb it. He asked them for a simple statement of the facts, and promised he would try to air their position after checking it with his original sources.

Although his sources dismissed much of the subsequent statement as "pie in the sky," Schorr said he went on the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite Friday, Aug. 20, with a story giving the White House position as well as a partial knockdown by his own sources.

The FBI investigation was started earlier the same day. Schorr's bureau chief, Bill Small, refused to turn over the correspondent's personnel file to the FBI agent in view of the fact that he could not learn what job might be in the offing.

But Schorr himself answered several routine questions about his background and then ended the interview. He said he told the agent: "This is funny. If a job is going to be offered, shouldn't I know about it?"

In addition to a background check by the FBI, standard procedure prior to a high government appointment is an investigation of the prospect's back tax records. It was learned that no such check was made on Schorr.

Schorr became more and more curious as the days went by, as friends and associates called him to report contacts with the FBI. Marjorie Hunter, a New York Times reporter and Schorr's neighbor

was queried.

Irving R. Levine, an NBC correspondent, was asked by agents about Schorr's behavior when he was CBS' Moscow correspondent from 1955 through 1957. Schorr's nephew, Ken, 18, said neigh-

bors in New York were being asked about Schorr.

The White House official said last night that the FBI probe was initiated routinely by the office of Frederic V. Malek, chief White House recruiter.

Coincidentally, Malek and Schorr attended a dinner party together after the FBI investigation was begun. The correspondent asked Malek at the dinner if he really was under consideration for a job. Malek's reaction, Schorr said yesterday, was one of surprise. Malek told Schorr he would look into the matter and call him. Malek didn't call.

Schorr and the White House, and especially Colson, the President's special counsel, have been on the outs over Schorr's coverage of the wage-price freeze and Phase II of the government's economic plans.

Last Wednesday, after Schorr reported that the Pay Board was about to explode because of labor members' reaction to proposed guidelines, Colson called Frank Stanton, vice chairman of CBS, and complained that the report was inaccurate.

One version of the call is that Colson charged that Schorr had personally fed the story to The Washington Post and the New York Times, thereby compounding the inaccuracy. This version further alleges that when AFL-CIO President George Meany heard the Schorr television report he became so angry that he boycotted the Thursday session of the Pay Board.

Labor sources said yesterday Meany did miss the morning session, but it was because he had a doctor's appointment. The Washington Post story, written by Frank C. Porter, did not come from Schorr, according to Porter.

Stanton himself said he

didn't recall enough of the conversation with Colson to be precise about it. But he said that he didn't think it would be fair to say that Colson complained vigorously about Schorr's report.

A few weeks earlier, the White House accused Schorr of getting George Schultz, director of the Office of Management and Budget, in trouble with labor leaders by attributing a comment to Schultz that was made by another member of the administration. But, it turned out that another CBS reporter, not Schorr, had attributed the comment to Schultz.

Colson's telephone call to Stanton was one of several he had made since July 15 when Stanton went to the White House and acknowledged the difficulties between the administration and the network.

Stanton, in a meeting he requested with Colson, said that he personally would try to correct the hard feelings that had developed. Promising only fairness, Stanton invited Colson to talk to him personally when he felt that CBS had failed in its reporting.