

Miss Knight Pens Another Letter

By Drew Pearson

This column has now obtained a copy of another letter written by Frances Knight, efficient head of the State Department's passport office, which goes behind the back of her chief, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, regarding the surveillance of American citizens traveling abroad.

The issue arose when it was revealed that the FBI and State Department had arranged a special surveillance on the grandson of former Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, H. Stuart Hughes, distinguished Harvard professor and a former candidate for the U.S. Senate, because he had opposed President Johnson's policy in Vietnam.

Miss Knight made it clear in her letter, this one written to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, that she and Hoover were in cahoots regarding the continued espionage on American citizens traveling abroad.

This is the second time a letter has come to light written by Miss Knight in violation of either the Hatch Act or of approved Government procedures.

The first letter was written to Scott McLeod, a prominent McCarthyite, then assistant to the late Sen. Styles Bridges (R-N.H.), in which she enclosed a speech written at the request of Sen. Karl Mundt (R-S.D.), another McCarthy backer, and Chairman Leonard Hall of the Republican National Committee, in which she described President Truman as operating "the most corrupt and inefficient government this Nation has ever known."

The second letter, addressed to J. Edgar Hoover, was written March 21, 1966, just after it was revealed that Prof. Hughes was marked for surveillance by the State Department on his trip abroad, and makes it clear that Miss Knight and Hoover were operating the surveillance business on their own, without the real knowledge of the Secretary of State. The letter reads:

"Dear Mr. Hoover:

I have just tried to reach you by telephone, but without success, and have been told that you may not be available for some hours. As I have a communication to make to you, which I regard as one of extreme urgency, I am sending you this note by special messenger. If you wish, I would be available this evening to discuss the matter with you in detail.

This morning I have already received several telephone calls from newspapermen inquiring for further details about the FBI request of February 6th concerning Professor Hughes.

I am seriously afraid that this interest may indicate preparations for a sustained press campaign against us. We have already discussed the attitude of the Secretary of State towards the long-established practice of the Department making inquiries at the request of the FBI. I cannot help expressing to you the alarm I feel at various pointers which, to my mind, show clearly that he is looking for suitable pretexts to put an end to this practice. My own position in the Department is such that I do not wish to commit too many details to paper, for reasons that will be obvious to you. But I would willingly elaborate them for you personally if you wish to pursue the matter, as I have no doubt you will. Forgive me if I sound alarmist, but I am quite certain from what I have heard that a principle of vital importance is at stake which affects the whole conduct of the government and, in particular, the effectiveness of the bureau.

Cordially,
F. Knight."

Prof. Hughes, whom the FBI wanted spied on during his trip abroad, is a long way from being a Communist. He had run for the Senate from Massachusetts as a Democrat in opposition to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Kennedy later championed his right to travel abroad unmolested. Hughes's grandfather was not only governor of New York and Chief Justice of the United States, but was also the Republican nominee for President in 1916 and came within a few votes of defeating Woodrow Wilson. Prof. Hughes's only crime was in belonging to a committee that opposed President's Johnson's policies on Vietnam.

Miss Knight's chief champion has been Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.), who was able to secure the secret Otepka papers from the State Department.

During hearings regarding the reorganization of the bureau of security and consular affairs, once headed by Abba Schwartz, Sen. Dodd asked several questions indicating his support of Miss Knight. He followed this up with letters to the Secretary of State to make sure that nothing happened to Miss Knight in any State Department reorganization.

In the end, Secretary Rusk bowed to Sen. Dodd. He kept Miss Knight and fired her superior, Abba Schwartz.

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