

Nixon Spy Found Democrats Sniping

We have read the confidential reports of the two correspondents who doubled as political spies for the White House.

Seymour Freidin and Lucy Goldberg, using their news credentials to get off-the-record interviews, reported to the Nixon camp what the top Democrats were saying privately about one another and what the press corps knew but couldn't write.

The pair were recruited by President Nixon's veteran political operator, Murray Chotiner, who paid them each \$1,000 a week to spy on the Democrats. They are identified in the confidential reports only as "Chapman's Friend."

Early in 1971, Freidin reported to Chotiner that there had been a falling-out between Sens. Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.) and Ed Muskie (D-Maine), the 1968 running mates. Freidin quoted Humphrey as telling him sadly: "I'm sorry about Ed. He even acts sometimes as if he never knew me."

Freidin also approached Humphrey's wife, Muriel, about the Muskie relationship. "Mrs. Humphrey was short and to the point," wrote Chapman's

Friend. She said simply: "We don't ever see them except at some functions. There isn't much to talk about."

Humphrey's Minnesota colleague, Sen. Walter F. Mondale, gave Freidin this off-the-record report: "Hubert feels pretty sore at the way Muskie has behaved toward him. There hasn't been any rapport between the two I know of lately. Muskie, I'm sure, believes that Hubert is undercutting him. I don't think that's true. Muskie is killing himself off. But he sees ghosts all over, trying to do him in."

Later in the year, Humphrey spoke to Freidin again about Muskie. "You'd think that I was a member of the Nixon staff the way Ed avoids me..." grumped Humphrey. "He seems to be getting touchier and more thin-skinned as time goes by."

Freidin's reports began on March 23, 1971. He was replaced on Sept. 6, 1972, by Goldberg who continued the reports until election day. Chotiner distributed copies to H. R. Haldeman, then the White House chief of staff, and to John N. Mitchell, then Attorney General. After Mitchell abruptly left Washington in the wake of the Watergate

break-in, his copy went to campaign manager Clark MacGregor.

Freidin frequently made the rounds of Democratic presidential contenders and reported back to Chotiner their off-the-record cracks about one another.

He reported, for example, that Humphrey told him during "a 20-minute personal talk" that Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) was "playing in a civics class with theory... His welfare proposals are a school boy's dreams."

In turn, McGovern complained to Freidin that Humphrey "is being very rough... It will not do him any credit and only leave him more embittered than he is."

Ex-Sen. Fred Harris (D-Okla.), who then had presidential ambitions, "almost frothed at the mouth," reported Freidin, at the mention of Humphrey and Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.). Harris called Humphrey "old scar tissue" and Jackson "the candidate from Mars."

Another ex-senator with presidential ambitions, Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.), bad-mouthed everyone during his private

talks with Freidin. Referring to Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), McCarthy called him "the barefoot boy with brass and an intellect of the same metal."

Sen. Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) was more amused than angry, reported Chapman's Friend, at his fellow presidential contenders. In a reference to McGovern and Muskie, Hughes said: "George and Ed now go around with the weight of the world on their shoulders. You can't even kid them. They really get up tight if you needle them even a little bit."

Larry O'Brien, then the Democratic National Committee chairman, called the presidential contenders together to stop the backbiting and to seek unity. Afterward, Freidin gave Chotiner a detailed report of their closed door session.

Footnote: Freidin submitted detailed reports on secret Democratic strategy sessions, and Goldberg picked up a few tidbits of political gossip. But in large part, their reports contained routine political information that could have been gleaned from the newspapers.

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