

The Multiple Agent

In the cramped, seedy office that the Hearst Newspapers maintain for their London correspondent, Seymour Freidin sits among some of the mementos of a long and prolific career. There is a citation from the Overseas Press Club for



CORRESPONDENT SEYMOUR FREIDIN
Almost a hero?

distinguished foreign reporting. There is an autographed picture of his friend, Senator Henry Jackson. To his credit are four books, dozens of magazine articles, countless newspaper stories and columns going back to World War II. None of these, however, earned Freidin the attention he has received since Jack Anderson recently named him as an agent paid by the Republicans to spy on Democratic presidential candidates in 1968 and 1972.

Freidin disagrees with the label, but acknowledges the activity. Actually, he was the original "Chapman's friend," the code name that Nixon Campaign Aide Murray Chotiner gave to two paid informants who traveled with the Humphrey and McGovern press parties. The material they delivered was pretty tame. Freidin and the woman who succeeded him as the second Chapman's friend,

Lucianne Cummings Goldberg, reported the candidate's latest speeches, activities and statements to Chotiner. Freidin added some analysis of his own. John Mitchell called the material "junk," and it appears that nothing really confidential or damaging was sent.

Goldberg's name surfaced first. She is a freelancer on the fringes of Washington journalism, and her participation in the caper was dismissed as a bad joke. But Freidin, 56, though never in the top stratum of his trade, is clearly in a different league from Goldberg. He marched into Prague with Patton and later served as foreign editor of the New York *Herald Tribune*. He is also a Democrat. Why did he become involved in so tawdry an episode?

Double Agent. The money was one factor. Freidin says that he was paid \$30,000 plus \$10,000 for expenses last year and a lesser amount in 1968. Actually, Freidin says, he was a double agent or maybe even a triple one. He told the Humphrey people in 1968 and the McGovern staff last year that he was working on a campaign book. While feeding information to the Republicans, he was really trying to gather material for an "inside" book about internal friction in the G.O.P. camp. He sees no distinction between what he did and the ploy used by Joe McGinniss in 1968. McGinniss worked as a Republican campaign staffer while secretly doing research for *The Selling of the President 1968*, a tough and witty attack on Richard Nixon and some of his aides. "If I had brought it off," Freidin says ruefully, "everyone would be calling me a big hero."

The distinction between McGinniss and Freidin, of course, is that McGinniss was not taking money from one party to spy on the other. It was not the first time that Freidin had accepted pay while trading information. Freidin, like some other correspondents overseas, became friendly with CIA agents in trouble spots around the world. While covering the Soviet takeovers in Eastern Europe in the 1940s, Freidin was often debriefed by CIA men and got leads from them in return. Occasionally, he says, he accepted CIA money—"so little that it was laughable." To Freidin, a staunch cold warrior like many of his colleagues there, the relationship was all part of the fight against Communism. He dealt with the CIA, he claims, "because it was the right thing. I never told them anything that I wouldn't print."

In 1966 the *Herald Tribune* folded, and soon the cold war began to fade as a big, continuing story. Freidin found himself adrift, his expertise devalued, the demand for his byline sinking. It is a common situation for aging journalists who have committed themselves to one subject or cause. "I wanted to do a book on the States," he recalls, "but my problem was how I could get an angle. I went

to the 1968 conventions, and at the Republican Convention I met Murray Chotiner."

Chapman's friend was soon born. Ironically, Freidin got no book at all out of the 1968 campaign. In 1972, he says, he knew "something fishy was going on" among the Republicans, but he was unaware of the Watergate secrets. After that story broke, he realized that any "inside" book he might do would be valueless. So he quit before the election and signed on with Hearst. Now, with his new notoriety, he claims to have a number of offers to write his inside book; he feels in demand again. This week he will be back in New York to see if Hearst editors share that view.