

CHOTINER ADMITS PAYING NEWSMEN

Confirms a \$1,000-a-Week
Salary but Denies that
Journalists Were Spies

By BILL KOVACH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 — Murray Chotiner, a longtime political associate of President Nixon, confirmed today that he had hired Seymour K. Freidin, a journalist, for \$1,000 a week to supply intelligence on Democratic candidates to the Nixon campaign.

Mr. Chotiner confirmed a report published by Les Whitten, the associate of the columnist, Jack Anderson, disclosing that Mr. Freidin, now head of the Hearst newspapers' London bureau, had provided information to the Committee for the Re-election of the President during parts of 1971 and 1972.

Mr. Freidin was a free-lance writer in Washington at the time and he quit his job with the Republicans in September when he was offered the Hearst job.

He was followed in his job of traveling with Democratic candidates, not for the public news media but to provide private intelligence reports to Mr. Chotiner and the re-election committee, by Lucianne Cummings Goldberg. Mrs. Goldberg's involvement was disclosed earlier this month.

Although each of the free-lance writers was paid \$1,000 a week plus travel expenses, Mr. Chotiner said the effort got little for its money.

"We didn't get anything we couldn't have gotten in the public press—we just got it a little quicker. I guess it was worth the \$1,000 just to know the stuff the newspapers were reporting was quite accurate," Mr. Chotiner said today. He insisted that the agents he had hired were not "spies" for the Republicans.

Mr. Chotiner's admission that he paid two persons \$1,000-a-week to supply intelligence reports to the Nixon campaign, is under investigation by Government officials.

Phillip S. Hughes, head of the General Accounting Office's office of Federal elections, said today that his auditors were checking "to see if the expenditures were adequately disclosed under the reporting law."

Mr. Hughes, who said the investigation would take several days, said the study was ordered after auditors of accounts of the Committee for the Re-election of the President said they had "no recollection of seeing those kinds of payments reported."

Implication Denied

The Hearst office in New York said Mr. Freidin had vigorously denied the implication that he "spied for Republicans" and said he planned a book on his experience. Mrs. Goldberg offered the same explanation when her role became known.



Fabian Bachrach

Seymour K. Freidin

According to Mr. Chotiner, neither of the two worked for any legitimate news agency while they worked for him.

"Neither of them drew any money from anybody else while working for me," Mr. Chotiner said. And, although both claimed identities as working journalists to achieve access to the Democratic campaigns not open to nonjournalists, Mr. Chotiner insisted that the operation was "not a spy operation."

"This was not a spying operation," he repeated. "I believe someone who passes himself off as on your side when he is actually on the other side is a spy."

Mr. Whitten, in his column today, reports on the diligence with which Mr. Freidin pursued his duties for Mr. Chotiner.

"Apparently," Mr. Whitten writes, "we are among those who were duped by Freidin during the 1972 campaign. He frequently visited us and pumped us for campaign information. He also pleaded with us to give his son Joshua a chance to accompany us to Miami Beach for the Democratic convention. We paid Joshua to be a messenger, and he had the run of our Miami Beach offices throughout the convention."

First Mr. Freidin, and then when he quit, Mrs. Goldberg, furnished Mr. Chotiner daily reports on the activities of the Democratic campaigns. The reports included information on schedules, could estimates and reactions, and detailed interviews with the candidates and staff members designed to draw out comments on other Democrats.

Data Discounted

Campaign officials, including former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, have indicated that the information was not of much use to the Nixon campaign.

Those involved in the operation, however, were concerned enough that the operation remain secret that until recently

it was known publicly only as the work of "Chapman" and "Mr. Chapman's friends."

That, Mr. Chotiner said today, was the result of his own "twist of intrigue."

"Tom Dewey, when he was in politics, always used the name Chapman when he made a long distance telephone call on any phone outside his own office," he explained today. "He did so because he knew if he gave his real name a hotel operator or some other curious person might be tempted to listen in. Nixon knew about all that, and I thought it would be a little intriguing feature."

Although he insisted that Mr. Freidin and Mrs. Goldberg were the only people so hired by him for the 1972 election, Mr. Chotiner said it was not the first time he had done so.

"But don't ask me which other campaigns," he warned. "I won't say."

He was asked, and he wouldn't.

Charge Called 'Nonsense'

Special to The New York Times

ATHENS, Aug. 28—"To suggest that what I was doing for Murray Chotiner was espionage is absolute nonsense," Mr. Freidin said in Athens tonight. "First there were no secrets. The thing leaked like a sieve and all you had to do was to listen. I gave my own unvarnished views which Mitchell once called Junk because they were presented by Chotiner."

Mr. Freidin who is flying to Cyprus tomorrow after a brief vacation near Athens, said he had received "approximately \$11,000," which however included about one-third in expenses. He said he had duly reported it in his tax statement.

"Chotiner and Mitchell hate each other," Mr. Freidin said. "Mitchell hated the idea of having Chotiner even around, because he was the man who created Nixon back in 1946 and had access to the President. So Mitchell kept Chotiner on the periphery—way frozen out. I tried to use this mutual hostility to get information for a kind of inside book that would have been a more serious study of what Joe Guinness did, I believe in 1970, called 'The Selling of the President.'"

He said that Mr. Chotiner had invented the code name "Chapman" for him and that "Chapman's friend" and "Chapman's reports" were phrases used in the reports.

"I will say this, however," Mr. Freidin asserted, "Chotiner never, never asked me to do anything dirty. I gave my views—which Mitchell once said he could have read in the morning papers—but whether this commentary or what have you ever reached the President, I cannot say for sure."