

Business 'As Usual'



Jack Anderson

WE REPORTED recently that Alex Armendaris, the irresponsible boss of the Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE), was mismanaging the taxpayers' money.

From the confidential OMBE files, we learned that he took subordinates on a junket to Puerto Rico, intervened to help friends get OMBE contracts and accepted gifts from OMBE contractors.

We called Armendaris for an appointment to get his side of the story. Our reporter Gary Cohn rushed over to see the OMBE director before he left for South Bend, Ind., on "official business." Or so he said.

In South Bend, Armendaris met with officials of the O'Brien Paint Company. Then he took four of his subordinates to the Notre Dame-Navy football game. The OMBE delegation sat in a box owned by the paint company.

Back in Washington where they flew immediately after the game, Armendaris billed the government for the full \$33 per diem. He explained to us that he had charged the government for the time he spent at the football game because he had "discussed business with O'Brien officials" between downs.

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NEWLY RELEASED documents have revived interest in the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who

were executed for espionage 22 years ago. But still buried is the stark story of how the FBI plotted to wring a confession from Julius by executing his wife first.

It was the FBI's grisly hope that Julius, horrified by the trauma of his wife's death and his own impending electrocution, would blurt out a last-minute confession.

The late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover was worried about public doubts that the Rosenbergs were guilty, doubts that still stubbornly persist. Hoover wanted a dramatic, 11th-hour confession to clear up the doubts.

The FBI was convinced, according to our sources, that the Rosenbergs not only were guilty but that the strong-willed Ethel was preventing her weaker husband from confession.

Indeed, the FBI had learned from Julius Rosenberg's cellmate, a secret FBI informer, that he had admitted guilt. The informer's reputation for credibility, however, was uncertain, so the second-hand confession couldn't be used.

The FBI needed an admission from Julius' own lips. An attempt was made therefore, to make sure Ethel went to the electric chair first.

But the FBI was unable to change the execution schedule. Julius was executed first, then his wife 10 minutes later. Neither gave a dying confession.