



# Families felt the pressure of FBI watch

BLACKLIST • From F1

Mindy Fried. "If you were to put it in the context of our language, we would say that person is a terrorist. Because he is associated with the Soviet Union, with the overthrow of the government, they didn't really look at it as a union organizer who is trying to get good wages for the workers. It was really blown up as something much more terrifying."

Each of these men – two among dozens of Western New Yorkers with communist ties closely watched by the FBI during the height of McCarthyism and after – were described in the Buffalo press at some point as the most dangerous or prominent communist in Western New York. Each man was on the personal radar of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and occupied the upper echelons of Hoover's secret index of subversive Americans to be rounded up in the event of war with the Soviets.

But today, a year after their deaths and decades after the FBI's intrusion into their personal lives pushed each into successful careers in the arts and activism, their reputations as accomplished American artists and community heroes are secure.

Both men, guided by a belief in human equality that predated any of their artistic or political activities, joined the Communist Party in the late 1930s. For that reason, each became the subject of intense scrutiny from Hoover's FBI, which recorded thousands of minute details from their public and private lives through surveillance operations and armies of paid informants.

What follows are a few snapshots from the lives of Rogovin and Fried during the height of the McCarthy period in the 1950s and '60s, when Hoover's well-oiled domestic spying machine pursued its subjects with relentless and sometimes blind ambition.

In 1967, the information the FBI collected from the KLM airline clerk Rogovin spoke with in Buffalo quickly made its way up the agency's chain of command and landed on the desk of Hoover himself.

In an urgent memo to Richard Helms, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Hoover wrote that the FBI had alerted its own legal attaches (or foreign offices) in Bern, Switzerland; Bonn, Germany; London, Paris and Rome that the Rogovins might be en route and to report back on their activities while they were in Europe.

"This Bureau, however, would appreciate any pertinent information your Agency may receive concerning the Rogovins," Hoover added, hoping to supplement his own agency's resources with those of the CIA.

FBI offices across Europe sent back acknowledgments of Hoover's heads-up, all of which are completely redacted in the file.

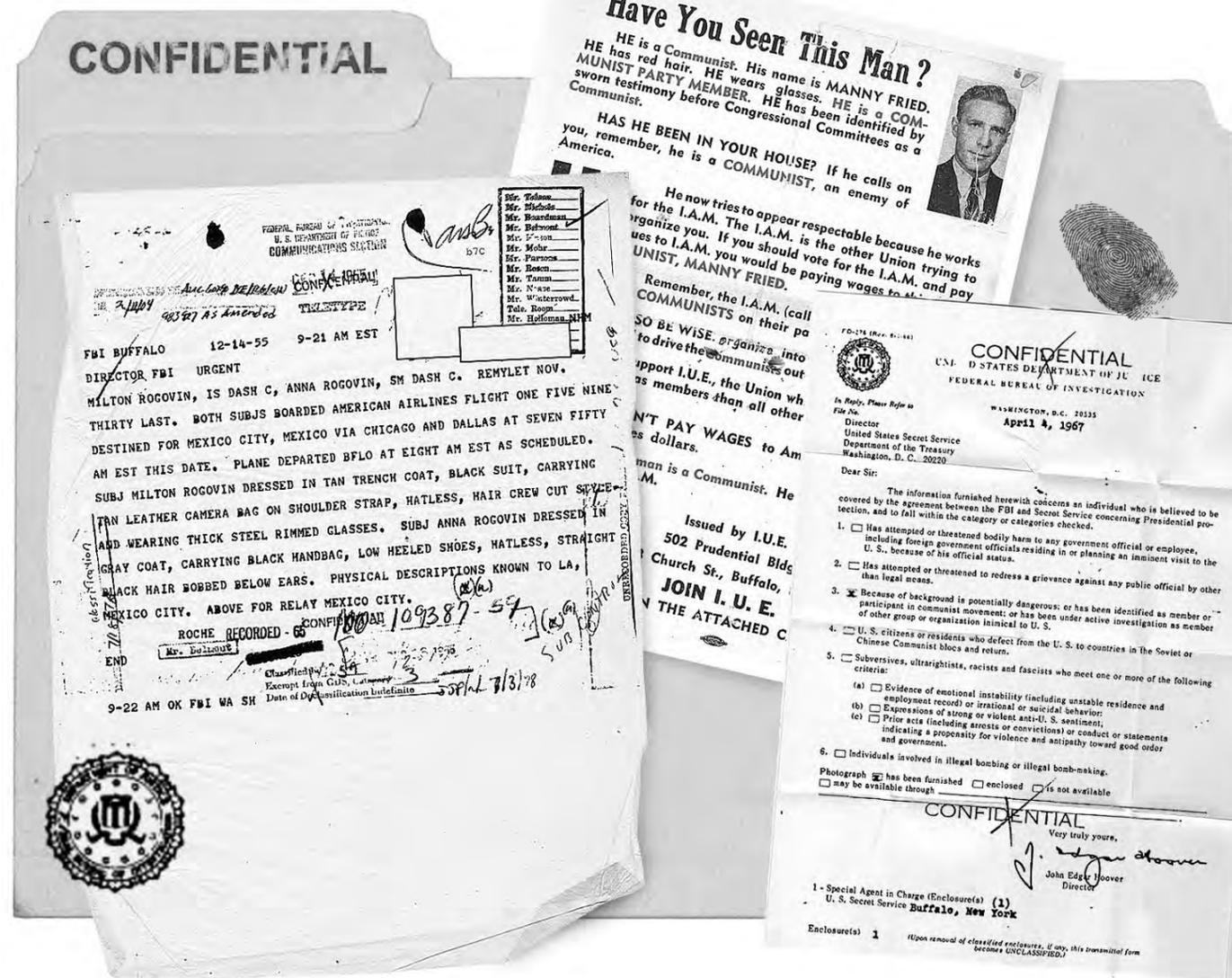
However, the last page of memos from this period indicates that, to the best of the FBI's knowledge, the planned trip never took place. Hoover's letter – which suggested nothing less than the full activation of the United States' vast international security apparatus – was the latest in a long series of false alarms.

In February 1954, Emanuel J. Fried received a subpoena to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee in Albany, an instrument ostensibly designed to root out dangerous communists that tarred the reputations of thousands of left-leaning Americans.

Fried would later challenge the constitutional legitimacy of the committee, prompting Albert Einstein to write Fried a letter of support. But at the time, he worried about how to approach the hearing.

"I still don't know what I'm going to do," Fried wrote in his diary, excerpts of which his daughters shared with The News. "I have considered using the 5th amendment. It says that you don't have to say anything on the grounds that it might incriminate you or make you a criminal. Informers keep showing up pretending to be somebody else. [Daughters] Mindy and Lorrie are losing friends at school. I can tell the FBI is tapping into our telephone. Sometimes they breathe heavily and I can hear them."

On Jan. 5, 1954, Milton Rogovin sat in the Mexico City airport calmly reading a newspaper



The FBI's decades-long investigations into Milton Rogovin and Manny Fried yielded thousands of pages of documents, detailing everything from their physical condition to trips out of town. Documents included a 1955 FBI memo (left) describing Rogovin and his wife as they left Buffalo for Mexico, an anti-Communist union flier about Fried and a document signed by J. Edgar Hoover that argued for Fried's inclusion on a list of dangerous Americans. (For a deeper look into the FBI files of Milton Rogovin and Manny Fried, visit [www.buffalonews.com](http://www.buffalonews.com).)



FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, seen here in 1953, made sure the FBI kept close tabs on Fried and Rogovin.

while an FBI special agent snapped at least seven pictures of him from a distance. In one of the photos, reproduced in extremely low-quality photocopies in his FBI file, Rogovin seems to stare directly at the camera with an angry expression on his face.

The bureau's legal attache in Mexico City, alerted by the Buffalo FBI office that past December, had been trailing Rogovin and his wife around the country for a month and a half.

During the Rogovins' time in Mexico, agents recorded license plate numbers and interviewed hotel staff as the couple moved from one hotel to the next in Mexico City.

The FBI followed the Rogovins to the southern Mexican region of Oaxaca, a subsequent report said, where they met with a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (the leftist organization of volunteers who fought against Franco during the Spanish Civil War), who had ties to American communists in Mexico and to the blacklisted screenwriter Albert Maltz.

Agents watched the Rogovins as they visited museums and friends' apartments, as they ate in restaurants and took snapshots of ancient ruins. One report included the observation that, aside from innocuous interactions with left-leaning people and organizations, the couple's activities "appear to be those of the ordinary tourist in that they visited most of the localities of normal tourist attractions."

A year later, FBI agents at the Buffalo airport observed Rogovin, dressed in a "tan trench coat, black suit, carrying tan leather camera bag" and Ann, "dressed in gray coat, carrying black handbag, low heeled shoes, hatless, straight black hair bobbed below ears" as they departed for Mexico again.

They telegraphed that information to Mexico City, but the FBI office there lost tabs on the couple when they switched their travel plans at the last minute. This time, much to the chagrin of the FBI, the Rogovins managed to leave Mexico City for Acapulco and head back to the United States before the feds caught on.

Immediately after his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee in early

1954, life for Fried and his family changed dramatically. Neighbors and friends cut them off. Fried's 11-year-old daughter, Lorrie, lost her best friend and was shut out of neighborhood carpools.

Fried's wife, Rhoda, found the stress and social ostracism almost impossible to bear. As informants and agents were circling him and his family as they went about their daily lives and with his position as a labor leader under increasing fire, Fried was struggling to hold his life together.

Then, this happened:

The I.U.E., an electrical workers union that had formed seven years prior, put out a flier smearing Fried, who was still working for the I.A.M., a rival union representing machinists and aerospace workers.

The flier featured two pictures of a young Fried, one tinted red to represent his communist association. It warned workers not to associate with him or to vote to join the I.A.M.

"HE is a Communist," the flier warned. "His name is MANNY FRIED. HE has red hair. HE wears glasses. HE has been identified by sworn testimony before Congressional Committees as a Communist. HAS HE BEEN IN YOUR HOUSE? If he calls on you, remember, he is a COMMUNIST, an enemy of America."

A report from his FBI file in 1956 showed that the FBI was well aware of the pressure its activities were putting on Fried's wife and children. According to an informant, the report stated, the couple's children "have been having difficulty with other children who were not allowed to associate with Mannie's children because of Mannie's activities."

"My best friend down the street was told not to play with me, and that was huge because she and I hung out all the time," Lorrie Rabin recalled. "I went to dancing school on Saturday nights, and none of the parents would allow me in their carpool because I was the communist child. My mother became sort of like a lioness – she was going to protect her child. What a big memory I have of her getting on the phone and calling and calling and calling and finally finding a parent who would allow me into a carpool."

Fried's daughters could tell the phones were tapped, too. Though the period was difficult for Lorrie, she tried to find the humor in it.

"I had a girlfriend, at 11 years old, we thought it was a hoot. And we would tell 11-year-old-type dirty jokes to entertain the FBI. [My friend] and I would get on the phone and we'd talk, telling the kinds of jokes that 11-year-olds think are funny," she said.

In 1957, Milton Rogovin was called to testify before a House Un-American Activities Committee hearing in Buffalo – an event that caused him and his wife to cut their official ties to the local Communist Party and in some ways launched Rogovin on his career as a social documentary photographer.

During that hearing, its director, Richard Arens, an aide to Sen. Joseph McCarthy, responded angrily to Rogovin's refusal to answer questions about ties between his trip to Mexico and the attempted assassination of former President Harry Truman by Puerto Rican nationalists.

"It is a pretty serious charge to level against a man," Arens said, "that he is a member of an organization that has been repeatedly, by Government agencies, including the courts, found to be part of an international apparatus of a foreign power on American soil, operating to destroy this country. We would like to give you, therefore, an opportunity, as any red-blooded American ought to have, to deny, while he is under oath, that he is part of that apparatus. ... Do you care to avail yourself of the opportunity to stand up here and deny while you are under oath that you are a member of the Communist apparatus in this community?"

Rogovin talked with his lawyer for a moment and responded, like so many before and after him: "I decline to answer on the basis of the first and the fifth amendments." In so doing, he sealed his reputation as a public enemy in the eyes of the FBI, which only pursued him more intensely thereafter.

Life in the Fried household in the 1950s, as Lorrie Rabin recalled, came with its own set of rituals.

"It was our household version of the parents needing to teach the child to beware of strangers. I remember as a very young child: 'Men might come up to you and ask you where Daddy is in the evenings. And you are to not say anything. You're not to talk to them because they're dangerous people,'" she recalled. "This is my dad and my mother telling me this, when I was 10 years old, 11 years old, around the time of the first subpoena. They'd say, 'What are you going to say? Let's role-play this, what are you going to say?' It got scary."

In the early 1960s, after spying on Milton Rogovin for 20 years and driving him and his wife out of the communist party in 1957, the FBI tried to turn him into an informant.

"If the subject is cooperative, considerable past history of the CP in

Buffalo could be verified through him," a 1961 report said. "Subject could provide considerable information regarding individual members of the CP in the past, possibly reveal some foreign contacts, could show where sources of income for the CP exist and because of his regard by the CP as a theoretician and student of Marxism, could gain a useful position in the CP from which he could be of great future assistance."

On June 19, 1961, two FBI agents approached Rogovin near his Chippewa Street optometry business. When the agents identified themselves, Rogovin was abrupt but respectful. "I have nothing I wish to discuss with the FBI," he said. "If you think there is something wrong there are certain legal procedures you can go through."

"It is noted," the report states, "that although subject spoke brusquely, he was visibly nervous, breathing quickly and beginning to perspire immediately after [Special Agent] [redacted] introduced himself."

Undeterred, the FBI tried again several times to confront and interview Rogovin. Each time he refused to speak to the agents, until his temper got the best of him on June 3, 1964. "You've got a G-d- nerve stopping to talk to me!" Rogovin yelled at the two agents who approached him outside his office. "If you have anything to talk to me about, take me to court!"

After that, the FBI gave up on trying to turn Milton Rogovin into a domestic spy.

By 1955, Fried was already determined to put his experiences with the FBI and HUAC into the form of literature. That spring, he sent out copies of the first chapter of his novel "The Un-American," in which he wrote about the struggles of a fictional family persecuted by a right-wing witch hunt, in hopes of finding a publisher.

The FBI was paying attention. Someone who received a copy of the pamphlet promptly sent it to the bureau, where it was treated with grave importance, not for its national security implications, but for how it might make the agency look.

"This matter will be followed closely in an effort to obtain further information concerning the proposed book, especially in order to determine if there are any unfavorable references to the Bureau contained therein."

A later report, which argued for Fried's continued inclusion on Hoover's Security Index of leftist citizens to be detained in case of a national security emergency, noted that the FBI did not attempt to interview Fried. "Because of his theatrical sense and activity," the report said, "there is a real probability subject would use such an attempt as an opportunity to cause embarrassment to the Bureau."

Fried and Rogovin, whose artistic work could be seen as one collective indictment of misplaced power, spent the rest of their careers proving them right.

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