

Award (A Gold Watch to the FBI Man Who Has Followed Me for 25 Years)

By Ray Durem



Well, old spy
looks like I
led you down some pretty blind alleys,
took you on several trips to Mexico,
fishing in the high Sierras,
jazz at the Philharmonic.
You've watched me all your life,
I've clothed your wife,
put your two sons through college,
what good has it done?
the sun keeps rising every morning.
ever see me buy an Assistant President?
or close a school?
or lend money to Trujillo?
ever catch me rigging airplane prices?
I bought some after-hours whiskey in L.A.
but the Chief got his pay.
I ain't killed no Koreans
or fourteen-year old boys in Mississippi.
neither did I bomb Guatemala,
or lend guns to shoot Algerians.

I admit I took a Negro child
to a white rest room in Texas,
but she was my daughter, only three,
who had to pee...
and I just didn't know what to do,
Would you?
see, I'm so light, it just don't seem right
to go to the colored rest room;
my daughter's brown and folks frown on that
in Texas,
I just don't know how to go to the bathroom
in the free world!

Now old FBI man,
you've done the best that you can,
you lost me a few jobs,
scared a couple of landlords,
You got me struggling for that bread,
but I ain't dead.
and before it's all through,
I may be following you!

Born in 1915 in Seattle, Washington, **Ramon Durem** left home at 14 and joined the Navy. Discharged following an injury to his leg, Durem worked as a laborer along the West Coast. He eventually enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley and joined the Communist party in 1931. Active in various radical causes on campus, Durem was arrested for picketing against silk imports from Japan. Durem left for Europe, aboard the *Aquitania*, on March 31, 1937. During the Brunete Offensive, an enemy bullet struck Durem in the same leg that had been injured in the Navy. While recuperating at the American base hospital at Villa Paz, Durem met, courted and married a nurse from Brooklyn, Rebecca Schulman. In the summer of 1938 when the front lines broke and the hospital had to be evacuated, Durem returned to the 15th Brigade and served throughout the remainder of the Retreats and the Ebro Offensive. Durem was among the Americans who participated in the farewell parade in Barcelona and returned to the United States aboard the *Ausonia* on December 20, 1938. Durem and Shulman moved to Los Angeles where they had three daughters. Durem continued to be an active union organizer and was arrested on a number of occasions. During the 1940s Durem discovered an African American identity. He separated from his wife, remarried— this time to an African American woman— and moved his new family to Guadalajara, Mexico in order to escape government harassment. In 1962 Durem and his family returned to reside in L.A. In the late 1940s Durem began writing poetry under the name of "Ray Durem." His poems were first published in the *Crusader*, a journal edited by Robert Williams, the Black Nationalist leader who in the 1960s was forced into exile in Cuba and China. Other poems were published in the literary journals *Phylon* and *Venture* and in the *Herald Dispatch* newspaper. Durem's early poems attracted the interest of Langston Hughes, and in the mid-1950s Hughes tried unsuccessfully to help Durem secure a publisher. Hughes did include one of Durem's poems in the anthology *New Negro Poets: USA*. In the early 1960s Durem saw selections of his poetry published in the *Heritage Anthology Sixes and Sevens* and in the magazine *Umbra 2*. In 1963, at the age of 48, Ray Durem died of cancer in Los Angeles. A volume of Durem's poetry entitled *Take No Prisoners* (1971) was published in London posthumously.

Snapshots of FBI Report on Ray Durem...

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT **LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA** 35 L. A. FILE NO. **61-374**

REPORT MADE AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA	DATE WHEN MADE 2-10-40	PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE 10-27-39; 1-6-40	REPORT MADE BY A. D. HORN hlk
TITLE RAYMOND DUREM.			CHARACTER OF CASE SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES.

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

Information furnished that Subject DUREM, who fought two years in Spain with Loyalist forces, was formerly employed by State Relief Administration, Bakersfield, Calif., as case worker. Now employed on W.P.A., Bakersfield. Is an anarchist and Communist and preaches subversive doctrines among transients and recipients of relief. Nationalistic tendency cards submitted.

*1cc - On 1-15-40
1cc - [unclear]
1cc - [unclear]
1-27-40
ah*

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Details:

On October 27, 1939, HORACE V. GRAYSON, Assistant Chief of Police, Bakersfield, California, SR FBI, National Police Academy Graduate, invited Agent to accompany him to a conference regarding espionage activities in the vicinity of Bakersfield with H. R. HUBBARD, Director of the Kern County Work Relief Department, P. O. Box 312, Bakersfield, telephone 2915, and VERN AUSTIN, Petroleum Engineer with the California Division of Oil and Gas, 1101 Golden State Highway, Bakersfield, California, who is also a Major in the Cavalry Reserve and Commanding Officer of the Bakersfield Mobilization Center.

These gentlemen advised that RAYMOND DUREM fought for two years in Spain with the Loyalist forces; that he is an anarchist; that through pull with the State administration, DUREM obtained a

*ENCLD
571
CARD ATTACHED
IN SEARCHING UNIT*

APPROVED AND FORWARDED <i>A. B. Hood</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE <i>W</i>	DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES
COPIES OF THIS REPORT Bureau O.A.I., San Diego O.A.I., Fresno O.A.I., Fort Worth Los Angeles		100-18549-1 FEB 19 1940 FEB 15 1940

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Mexican Activity:

T-4 advised that DUREM on his visit to Mexico in the fall of 1950 did nothing except drink beer, loaf in the swimming pool, and there was no reason to believe that he was engaged in any Communist activity. T-6 further stated that during October, 1950, RAYMOND DUREM visited CARLOS SANCHEZ SANCHEZ, local leader of an off-shoot group of the Communist Party of Mexico, at which time he advised SANCHEZ that he was sympathetic with SANCHEZ's movement because the same type of thing had happened to him in the United States, and it was time the Communist Party got leaders who were correct in their philosophy and forceful in their action.

During December, 1950, T-5 advised that DUREM left Los Angeles to spend the Christmas holidays at Cuernavaca, Mexico. T-6 advised that during his stay in Cuernavaca DUREM again appeared to be merely on a vacation but in conversation with T-6 advised that he is very active with the Negro groups in the United States and gave the impression that he is doing important work. T-6 advised that DUREM again was critical of the Communist Party leaders in the United States, stating that almost all of them were guilty of personal opportunism and stated that even HARRY BRIDGES has recently shown this trait because he has failed to support recent strikes of his men in an effort to be on good terms with the American Government.

T-6 advised that LINDA STROMBERG, who was referred to as the person in charge of the Mexico City Headquarters of the group, is presently estranged from DUREM and desires the manner of living of such alleged radicals as the subject who she regards as cynics who are of little or no use to the laboring man.

T-1 in April, 1951, advised that on April 22, 1951, subject left Los Angeles for Cuernavaca and returned to Los Angeles on May 8, 1951. Again T-1 advised that this visit was apparently entirely social in nature, and that no information has come to his attention of any subversive activity with reference to DUREM and the trip. The apparent reason for the trip was a visit with his family and an opportunity to relax inexpensively.

P E N D I N G

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DUREM, RAYMOND
127 or 129 E. 25th Street
Los Angeles, California 7-648

ANARCHIST

Fought for two years with Spanish Loyalist forces. An anarchist. Formerly a case worker on S. R.A. and while so engaged he preached subversive doctrine among migrants and recipients of relief. (H. V. Grayson, M.P.A., H.R. Hubbard, Director, Kern County Relief Dept., Bakersfield, Calif.; 61-7560-5207).

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