

# C.I.A. MEN OPENED 3 SENATORS' MAIL AND NOTE TO NIXON

Panel Says Aides Inspected  
Correspondence of U.S.  
Citizens for 20 Years

## 'BIG' PHOTOGRAPHIC FILE

Committee Agrees to Ask  
Ex-President if He Knew  
of Interception Work

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24 —

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence disclosed today that over a 20-year period ending in 1973, the Central Intelligence Agency opened foreign correspondence to and from prominent Americans, including Richard M. Nixon and Senators Hubert H. Humphrey, Edward M. Kennedy and Frank Church. Senator Church, the Idaho Democrat who is the committee's chairman, described a C.I.A. file of photographic copies of inspected mail as "big" but said that in the cases of Mr. Nixon, Mr. Humphrey and himself, only one letter each had been involved.

The letters were apparently intercepted during the C.I.A.'s routine surveillance of mail to and from the Soviet Union, China and Cuba. In that operation, millions of pieces of mail were intercepted, but not necessarily opened and photographed. The Rockefeller commission reported earlier this year:

### Criteria Not Known

Criteria used by the C.I.A. in deciding whether to open a particular letter have never been made public, Senator Church said today, however, that the names of none of the 12 individuals and institutions whose mail had been found in the C.I.A.'s files had appeared on the agency's "watch list," an index of names that were to

be given special attention.

Mr. Church announced that the panel had agreed unanimously at a closed session of the committee that it would ask Mr. Nixon for his testimony on a number of related matters, for example whether he had been made aware while in office of the C.I.A.'s mail-interception program.

The committee authorized its counsel, F. A. O. Schwarz 3d, to begin "negotiations" with Mr. Nixon's lawyer, Herbert J. Miller, on the time and place of the former President's appearance.

The C.I.A.'s surveillance of mail to and from American citizens, which took place at

Continued on Page 27, Column 1

## Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

various times in New York, San Francisco, New Orleans and Honolulu, has been investigated by other Congressional committees and by President Ford's commission on domestic C.I.A. activities.

But today's announcement by Mr. Church, during the public portion of the committee's hearing, was the first disclosure that the agency had opened, read and maintained in a special file photographic copies of overseas mail sent or received by prominent American political figures.

The file, which Mr. Church termed "big," was later described by a committee aide as having contained "correspondence to and from selected American politicians."

In addition, the Church committee's staff found copies in other C.I.A. files, of intercepted mail that had been sent or received by Dr. Arthur F. Burns, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board; the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the late civil rights leader, and his wife, Coretta; John D. Rockefeller 4th, Representative Bella S. Abzug, Democrat of Manhattan, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and Harvard University.

The incident concerning Mr. Nixon, Senator Church said, involved a single letter mailed to him in June, 1968, when Mr. Nixon was the leading candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, by an aide traveling in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Church said that the author of the letter, Raymond K. Price Jr., who later served as a speech writer in the Nixon White House, discussed among other things the candidate's chances of gaining the nomi-

nation and a Presidential victory the following November.

The C.I.A. files also yielded, according to Mr. Church, a letter mailed in 1958 by Mr. Humphrey, a Minnesota Democrat, from the Soviet Union to someone in the United States and a number of letters to Mr. Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, from "peace groups abroad."

In his own case, Mr. Church said, the C.I.A. had seized a letter that he had sent from Moscow in 1971 to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Chase A. Clark of Boise, Idaho.

None of the individuals or institutions named today, Mr. Church said, have been found on the C.I.A.'s index, called the "watch list," of individuals whose correspondence was to be given especially close attention.

That list did include, however, such names as those of Linus Pauling, the chemist and Nobel laureate; John Steinbeck, the author, and Victor Reuther, brother of the late labor leader Walter Reuther.

Today's witness before the Senate committee was James J. Angleton, a 57-year-old retired C.I.A. official who served for 20 years as the chief of its counterintelligence section and was responsible during that time for the mail-interception.

The interception of mail to and from Mr. Angleton conceded under questioning by committee members that the operation, known in C.I.A. nomenclature as HT Lingual, had been undertaken in direct violation of Federal statutes that prohibit any tampering with first-class mail.

Mr. Angleton declined to say in public today just what the "watch list" comprised, or how the names of Dr. Pauling, Mr. Steinbeck and Mr. Reuther came to be on it.

Mr. Angleton, an intense, silver-haired man who was known to his C.I.A. colleagues as "Mother," nevertheless defended, despite his admission of its illegality, the effectiveness of the HT Lingual operation.

As counterintelligence chief, Mr. Angleton told the televised hearings today, it was his responsibility to ferret out "foreign involvement" within the United States, particularly penetrations by Communist or other hostile intelligence services.

The intercepts of mail to and from Communist countries, particularly the Soviet Union, produced a number of items, he said, that were of such intelligence value that he could only assume that the Soviet Union had chosen to communicate with agents and political sympathizers in the United States because they believed that such

communications could not under law, be opened.

Mr. Angleton said in response to a question from Mr. Church that among those who had known of the mail operation were Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence and now Ambassador to Iran; J. Edgar Hoover, the late director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and William C. Sullivan, the former head of the F.B.I.'s domestic intelligence division.

But Mr. Angleton said that he could not refute the assertion by Mr. Church that, "to the best of our knowledge," Mr. Nixon had not been told when President of the existence of the mail-intercept operation, even though it had been in effect for 15 years by the time he took office.

In 1970, Mr. Nixon received from a committee of intelligence agency representatives a proposal, subsequently known as the Huston plan, for expanded surveillance of domestic radicals.

The plan contained a proposal for the reinstatement of mail openings, which, the committee asserted, had been "discontinued."

A fact, as Mr. Church pointed

out today, such openings were being undertaken by the C.I.A. when, in July of 1970, Mr. Nixon disapproved the Huston plan, and continued until 1972.

Mr. Church accused the C.I.A. of having, in effect, misrepresented its activities to an incumbent President and of having disobeyed a Presidential order by continuing the HT Lingual operation.

"What possible justification," the Senator asked, "was there to misrepresent a matter of such importance to the Commander in Chief?"

Mr. Angleton replied at first, that he believed the reference to the "discontinued" mail

openings had referred to the halting, in the late nineteen-sixties, of the intercepting of domestic mail by the F.B.I.

But under pressure from Mr. Church, he conceded that he had "no satisfactory answer" to the question, and that he could "make no excuse" for having acquiesced in the continuation of the program after Mr. Nixon had evidenced his disapproval.

"So," Mr. Church replied, "the Commander in Chief isn't the Commander in Chief at all. He's just a problem. You don't want to inform him because he might say 'No.'"

The Senator said that, in 1971, Mr. Helms had informed

John N. Mitchell, then the Attorney General, that the C.I.A. was opening mail, and that Mr. Mitchell had reportedly had "no hang-ups" about it.

In addition, he pointed out that Mr. Nixon had at first given his approval to the Huston plan, withdrawing it five days later only because of so far unexplained protests by Mr. Hoover.

The former President, Mr. Church said, "forgot" during the five-day period his constitutional duty to uphold the laws, "and when Mr. Mitchell, the chief law enforcement officer of the United States, learned about the mail-opening

program a year later, he forgot those duties, too."

In concurring with a motion by Senator Gary W. Hart, Democrat of Colorado, to seek Mr. Nixon's testimony on his knowledge of the mail-intercept program and on other elements of his involvement with the Huston plan, Mr. Church said that the former President was "the ultimate witness as to what he was told and was not told."

The Church committee had previously debated calling Mr. Nixon as a witness in its investigation of C.I.A. involvement in Chilean politics during the regime of that country's

late Marxist President, Salvador Allende Gossens.

But Mr. Church and the others ultimately decided that Secretary of State Kissinger, whom they did call, would make a better witness on such matters than would Mr. Nixon.

Today, however, Mr. Church said that the Senators had agreed that Mr. Nixon ought to testify about the Huston plan "and with regard to other matters." Whether he would appear before a televised session of the panel, in private or in some other form, such as his San Clemente, Calif., estate, will be worked out in the negotiations, the Senator said.