

New York Times

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1976

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Levi to Order Notification Of Citizens F.B.I. Harried

Unwitting Targets of 17-Year Program May Ask Destruction of Files or Seek Damages—Columnist Wins Ruling

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 30—Attorney General Edward H. Levi will soon order the Federal Bureau of Investigation to notify unwitting American citizens that they were targets of a 17-year F.B.I. program of harassment and disruption, informed Justice Department sources said today.

The directive from Mr. Levi, expected within a week, will open the way for hundreds and perhaps thousands of persons who were victimized by Cointelpro, as the F.B.I. termed the disruption effort, to seek the destruction of information gathered about them. The action will be taken under the terms of a new Federal privacy law.

The mass notification program, a proposal for which will be contained in recommendations to be sent to Mr. Levi within a few days, will also subject the Justice Department to the possibility of a barrage of civil lawsuits from individuals whose careers or personal lives were damaged by Cointelpro, one department official said.

In a related development, Representative Bella S. Abzug,

Democrat of Manhattan, disclosed today that Mr. Levi had approved a request by Joseph Kraft, the syndicated columnist, for the destruction of information compiled about him by the F.B.I. during a trip to Paris in 1969.

Mrs. Abzug, who heads a House subcommittee on Government information and individual rights, made public a letter in which Mr. Levi advised her of his decision that, under the privacy act, which took effect in September, the records relating to Mr. Kraft could no longer appropriately be maintained by the Justice Department.

The Congresswoman hailed as "a landmark action" Mr. Levi's ruling that under the law materials could be categorized as inappropriate even though they were lawfully gathered by the F.B.I.

The surveillance of Mr. Kraft was not a part of Cointelpro, but was carried out on orders from J. Edgar Hoover, the late F.B.I. director, by William C. Sullivan, then the bureau's in-

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telligence chief.

Mr. Sullivan, according to reliable bureau sources, trailed Mr. Kraft and arranged with French intelligence officials to place him under continuous surveillance and to install listening devices in his room at the Hotel George V, near the Arc de Triomphe.

The sources said that Mr. Hoover had ordered the surveillance because of his concern about Mr. Kraft's contacts with representatives of the North Vietnamese Government and the Vietcong, then in attendance at the Paris peace talks.

Mr. Kraft expressed gratitude today at Mr. Levi's decision to destroy the information gathered about him during that trip, terming the episode "a bugging story that has a happy dénouement."

The columnist said he was "very, very satisfied and vindicated that you can work within the system and get a result that I think is satisfactory."

He said he had been allowed to see the materials, and had not known "whether to laugh or cry" upon discovering that the files contained mostly "political gossip . . . that was all they seemed to be interested in."

King Cased Cited

An aide to Mrs. Abzug characterized Mr. Levi's interpretation of the materials that did not qualify as appropriate under the terms of the privacy act as "a very far-reaching one." He said he believed it would pave the way for the destruction of such items as those produced by the F.B.I.'s surveillance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The late Dr. King, a victim of Cointelpro, was for at least six years subjected to telephone taps and listening devices placed in his hotel rooms.

The Cointelpro effort, which began in 1956 and was formally halted by Mr. Hoover in 1972, included 12 programs directed against the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Ku Klux Klan and groups of students and "new left" radicals.

Most of what is known about the techniques employed by the bureau in Cointelpro has been disclosed in a suit by the Socialist Workers against the Department of Justice. Records recently provided by the Government under the terms of that suit showed that the party's New York City offices were burglarized by F.B.I. agents 92 times between 1960 and 1968.

Dismissals Sought

Previously disclosed Cointelpro documents have illustrated efforts by the bureau to secure the dismissal of Socialist Workers members from their jobs by sending of anonymous letters to employers, as well as attempts to foment discord between children and their parents or between wives and husbands.

In some cases such attempts met with success, and though relatively little is known about Cointelpro as a whole, hundreds or even thousands of members of other domestic political organizations may have been the targets of the same techniques and may still be unaware of their involvement.

Such persons will receive the notifications to be ordered by Mr. Levi, according to a Justice Department official, may decide to sue for damages or compensation for lost jobs or disrupted marriages.