

F.B.I. Reportedly Listed Citizens to Detain in Crisis

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 2—The Federal Bureau of Investigation began in the early nineteen-fifties to compile a secret list, known as the "Security Index," of American citizens who were "targeted for detention" in a national emergency under the Subversive Activities Control Act, according to two sources who claim direct knowledge of the operation.

The sources said that the list, which at its peak contained about 15,000 names, included in addition to suspected agents of hostile governments virtually all known members of the American Communist party, some of whom were "quite elderly," several clergymen and others who, according to the sources, posed no genuine internal security threat.

Calls List Ridiculous

Although the detention provisions of the act under which the index was established were repealed by Congress in 1971, one of the sources said that the index — now reportedly much smaller — was still being maintained by the bureau's Domestic Intelligence Division in anticipation of possible reinstatement of such authority.

The F.B.I. has never acknowledged that it has maintained an index of potential persons to be detained, although the existence of such a list was widely rumored in radical and Communist party circles in the nineteen-fifties and in the late sixties by some black leaders who feared it might be employed to quell urban unrest.

But one of the sources, who termed the Security Index "a ridiculous thing," said it was known jocularly within the F.B.I. as the "pick-up list." The other source described its ostensible purpose as "to assist

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in rounding up people who might commit sabotage or espionage."

An F.B.I. spokesman, in form of the sources' accounts, said at first that the bureau maintained "no Security Index." Asked to check further, he later acknowledged that the F.B.I. does "maintain a list of individuals felt to be dangerous to the internal security of the United States."

He emphasized, however, that the list was "not for detention purposes, but is merely for administrative control within the F.B.I." he would not elaborate on the uses to which it was being put, if any.

Asked to characterize the individuals on the current list, one Justice Department official said that, in addition to suspected terrorists such as members of the Weather Underground, it was likely to include at any given time political dissidents and members of Marxist organizations ranging from the Communist party to the Pro-Chinese Revolutionary Union.

Never Heard of It

In a telephone interview, Melvin Wulf, the legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union's New York office, said that he had never heard of the F.B.I.'s Security Index.

But he called such a practice "clearly unconstitutional," especially in the absence of any legislative authority to detain individuals in the event of an emergency.

Under the First Amendment, he noted, "you're supposed to have a right to any political opinion you want to have."

According to one high Justice Department official, a group set up last March by Attorney General Edward H. Levi to study the F.B.I.'s intelligence-gathering operations has "considered" the legality of continuing the Security Index in the absence of any emergency detention authority.

It could not be learned, however, what recommenda-

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au's office in Media, Pa., in early 1971.

The stolen report noted that a young woman, a student at the University of California, would not be recommended for inclusion on the Security Index unless information could be found to corroborate the assertion of an anonymous informer that she was "an inveterate Marxist revolutionist."

The report, dated Feb. 26, 1971, contained no indication that the woman was suspected of any criminal activity or was being investigated for any other reason than her purported political beliefs.

Calls It Less Valid

One former Government official familiar with the index, which he said was known within the bureau as the "special list," conceded that the idea behind it "probably was sound years ago, when we would know a few weeks or a month in advance if a country was going to declare war on us."

But he said that, apart from the legal implications, the concept of "rounding up people who might commit sabotage or espionage" in time of war made less sense in the nuclear age.

According to this source, until the late nineteen-sixties the Security Index was compiled by the subversives control section of the F.B.I.'s Intelligence Division, which spent a good deal of time keeping track of the addresses and occupations of those on the list.

Because it was originally established as a "Communist index," he said, a member of the Communist party "would go on there almost automatically." But he and others said that the list was subsequently expanded to include members of other leftist organizations and of some on the right, such as the Ku Klux Klan, that had no obvious connection with any hostile foreign power.

The index was reportedly made up of three categories of individuals who were ranked according to the potential seriousness of the threat they posed to internal security—leaders of allegedly militant or "subversive" organizations, members of such organizations believed prone to violence or espionage, and other members of such groups.

Not Warranted

One of the sources said that, because of what he characterized as the F.B.I.'s propensity for inclusiveness and its inherent reluctance to purge its files, the index "undoubtedly" listed some individuals whose views and activities did not warrant their inclusion under the now-defunct language of the Subversives Control Act.

The guiding principle under which the index was compiled, he said, "was who would be dangerous to the country."

"That's a very nebulous concept," he added, pointing out

that, as late as 1971, the index contained the names of "about a dozen" clergymen.

According to this source and others, in the late nineteen-sixties officials of the bureau's Intelligence Division became concerned that the index by then included a number of individuals who, if detained in the event of an emergency, could prove a subsequent embarrassment to the F.B.I.

As a result, they said, the index was pared back from around 12,000 names to 2,000, a figure from which it has since declined still further.

The 10,000 or so names that were weeded out, the sources said, were placed in a "reserve index," which for practical purposes served as an inactive file.

It could not be learned whether the reserve index was still in existence, or what its status was.