

FBI Inquiry On Leftist Party Halted

Long Probe Finds No Wrongdoing by Socialist Workers

By John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Justice Department revealed yesterday that it has ordered the FBI to halt its 38-year investigation of the Socialist Workers Party—a small left-wing political group whose counterattack helped to plunge the FBI into crisis.

The bureau had been pursuing the SWP since 1938 without producing any evidence of wrongdoing by the party or its members.

The FBI's activities caused the SWP in 1973 to file what has become a \$40 million lawsuit against the bureau and other federal law enforcement agencies, charging them with illegal harassment and intimidation.

As a result of evidence uncovered by the lawsuit, the Justice Department has been conducting a seven-month investigation into allegations that the FBI carried out widespread illegal burglaries against suspected "extremists" during the past five years.

Justice Department spokesmen confirmed that the FBI had been ordered to stop investigating the SWP after it was learned yesterday that the department had sent letters to the SWP and to Judge Thomas P. Griesa, who is hearing the suit in U.S. District Court in New York, notifying them of the action.

The spokesmen said Attorney General Edward H. Levi had issued the order following a "systematic review" of how recently issued guidelines covering domestic security investigations apply to the SWP and its youth affiliate, the Young Socialist Alliance.

The spokesmen insisted that Levi's decision came in the course of reviewing the cases of all political groups under investigation by the FBI and had no connection with the still pending lawsuit.

Levi's guidelines stipulate that the FBI can investigate an organization or individual only if it has evidence that they have been engaged in some spe-

cific illegal act. The guidelines bar the FBI from maintaining surveillance of a group solely for the purposes of gathering intelligence or because it suspects that the members might do something illegal.

FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley also released a statement last night, saying that the bureau had participated with Levi in the review. Kelley added, "We agree it is now necessary to discontinue such investigations."

In New York, Cathy Perkus, a spokeswoman for the Political Rights Defense Fund, which is financing the SWP suit, said:

"We don't believe that this was

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done routinely. It's no coincidence that they picked the one organization that has been laying bare all the FBI's abuses and illegalities. We think they did it in hopes that we would end our lawsuit and put a stop to the revelations about what the FBI has done."

Perkus said the SWP plans to continue prosecuting its suit. She added that the SWP will ask Judge Griesa to issue a permanent injunction barring any further FBI activity against the SWP and to order the bureau to turn over immediately the names of all present and past informers infiltrated into the party.

The SWP, whose national membership is believed not to exceed 2,000, has its ideological roots in Trotskyism, a revisionist Marxist ideology based on the theory that permanent, worldwide revolution is needed to maintain economic systems beneficial to the working classes.

The party has insisted for years that it has no connection with the Communist Party or movement and does not advocate violence as a means of overthrowing the U. S. capitalist system.

In its suit, which originally asked damages of \$37 million, the SWP charged that its pursuit of legitimate political activities had been seriously undermined by an FBI "dirty tricks" campaign. The FBI activities included the use of paid informers, wiretapping, interception and opening of mail and burglaries of SWP offices and the homes of its members, the party alleged.

Also named as defendants in the suit were other federal agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the International Revenue Service.

The suit is still a long way from res-

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olution. But it already has triggered a number of sensational disclosures that include:

- An unprecedented admission by an FBI agent, George P. Baxtrum Jr., that, prior to 1965, he participated in at least 50 burglaries of SWP offices in New York at the direction of his superiors.

- Use by another FBI agent, Joseph Furrer, of his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination — the first known instance of an FBI official taking the Fifth — when questioned about his knowledge of burglaries against the SWP.

- Disclosure that an FBI informer, Timothy J. Redfearn, committed three burglaries against the SWP — the most recent in July — and turned documents taken in these break-ins over to the bureau's Denver field office.

- A charge by a Portland, Oreg., man, Alan H. Selling, that the FBI had paid him to join the SWP and act as an informer against the party. Selling also contended that he was induced by FBI officials to commit an illegal burglary, but he said that was directed against an organization not connected with the SWP.

Revelation that the bureau, over the years, had used approximately 1,600 persons as informers against the SWP and still retains 66 informers posing as members of the party.

The lawsuit also has had repercussions that go far beyond the FBI's involvement with the SWP. Earlier this year, Judge Griesa ordered the bureau to search the files in all its offices and turn over to the SWP all documents relating to the party.

The resulting documents search turned up a previously secret file in the New York field office indicating that the FBI had committed burglaries in the course of domestic security investigations during 1972 and 1973.

Previously, the bureau had said it ceased such so-called "black bag jobs" in 1966.

This information prompted the Justice Department to launch an investigation that has spread across the country to a number of cities. It has resulted in the empaneling of a federal grand jury in New York to probe the break-ins there and consider whether the FBI officials involved should be indicted on criminal charges.

Sources familiar with this investigation said yesterday that the grand jury should complete the first phase of its inquiry by the end of this week or early next week.

In this initial phase, the sources added, Justice Department lawyers have concentrated on presenting to the grand jury testimony or information from FBI agents who, during 1972 and 1973, were assigned to the New York field office's squad investigating the radial Weather Underground.