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F.B.I. Data Tells of Harassment of Teacher

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 28—The Counterintelligence Program of the Federal Bureu of Investigation attempted to encourage the dismissal of an Arizona State University professor in 1970 by filing an anonymous, derogatory letter about him with a college committee that was reviewing his teaching contract, according to documents from F.B.I. files.

The documents were released to the professor, Dr. Morris Starsky of Los Angeles, by Attorney General William B. Saxbe after Dr. Starsky appealed under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The documents were made available today to The New York Times.

It is the first documented specific incident of harassment of a private citizen by the counterintelligence program, known as Cointelpro.

Saxbe Disclosed Program

The existence of Cointelpro was disclosed by Mr. Saxbe last November when he made public a 15-year review of the F.B.I.'s domestic and counterintelligence efforts.

The committee that conducted the review of F.B.I. activities, a committee that included Clarence M. Kelley, director of the F.B.I., said that some of the Cointelpro operations "can only be considered abhorent in a free society.?

Dr. Starsky was an associate professor at Arizona State University from 1964 until 1970 and was known as an outspoken supporter of liberal causes. He had organized the first antiwar teach-ins at the school, helped win campus rights for the Students for a Democratic Society and was a member of the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers party.

Representatives of the Political Rights Defense Fund, working with the Socialist Workers party, have made the documents available to a House Judiciary subcommittee, which will begin an inquiry into F.B.I. activities Thursday.

Decision Laid to Hoover

According to the documents, which Professor Starsky is expected to make public tomorrow at a news conference in Phoenix, the authorization to send an anonymous letter to discredit him came directly from J. Edgar Hoover, the late director of the F.B.I., after a request was filed by the senior agent in charge in the Phoenix field office.

Under orders from Attorney General Saxbe, the bureau released 14 pages of documents to Dr. Starsky, including cables between the Phoenix field office and Washington headquarters of the bureau and other internal memorandums. The documents have been heavily edited with Mr. Saxbe's authorization on the grounds that the deleted portions might "compromise confidential F.B.I. sources." That they discuss law enforcement matters not covered by Cointelpro or that they dealt with internal policy-making decisions of the bureau. Four Cointelpro documents involvingg Dr. Sparsky were with held, according to a letter from Mr. Saxbe to Dr. Starsky's lawyer.

The first F.B.I. document, dated May 31, 1968, said: "It is apparent that new left organizations and activities in the Phoenix Metropolitan area have received their inspiration and leadership almost exclusively from the members of the faculty in the department of philosophy at Arizona State University, chiefly Assistant Prof. Morris J. Starsky. The most logical targets for potential counter-intelligence action locally are therefore pretty obvious."

The documents say that the bureau proceeded to keep track of Dr. Stardk Starsky, noting his growing problems with the university administration and the board of regents over his political activities. On April 7, 1970, according to the documents, the senior agent in charge in Phoenix sent a multi-page "Airtel (F.B.I. jargon for cable communication) to the "Director ,F.B.I.," who at that time was Mr. Hoover.

"Enclosed herewith for consideration of the bureau are six copies of an anonymous letter being suggested for mailing to five faculty members at Arizona State University (ASU) hearing charges against Prof. Morris J. Starsky a [deleted] in the Phoenix, division,? the first paragraph of the cable said.

Request for 'Approval'

It proceeded to tell of an alleged police incident reported to the Tempe, Ariz., police department in which Dr. Starsky and his wife had allegdly threatened a young worker in a socialist group in a dispute over money. The F.B.I. cable stated drawn his complaint and the matter had never been adjudicated.

The cable said that an F.B.I. informant had reported that a supporter of Dr. Starsky was "quoted as making the statement that Starsky should be fired because of this incident.?

There are several substantial deletions and the cable ends with the request for "approval" to mail an anonymous letter to the five professors sitting on an ad hoc university committee—Dr. Ross R. Rice, chairman, and Profs. Johh A' Cochran, Richard W. Effland, John P. Decker and Wallace Adams — reviewing charges against Dr. Starsky.

The same afternoon, according to the documents, ih a dispatch marked "route in envelope," from Mr. Hoover's office, it is noted that "authority is granted to make the anonymous mailing as suggested in Airtel."

The letter was sent shortly thereafter, the documents note. Two members of the faculty committee, Dr. Rice and Dr. Cochran, both said they recalled receiving it and they were sure the entire committee recefved or was aware of th letter.

"It seems appropriate that you should be informed of one of the most recent activities of Morris J. Starsky," the letter begins. It then alleged that when Mr. Starsky and his wife had heard of a suicide attempt of one of his close campus co-workers, he had gone to the man's house, had attempted to retrieve socialist documents, and the men had argued over money. At one point the letter alleged, "Starsky told him that his two associates would beat him unmercifully."

The letter went on, "It seems to me that this type of activity is something that Himmler or Beria could accept with pride." The letter was signed "A Concerned ASU Alumnus'"

Dr. Rice said in a telephone interview today that he had not known that the letter came from the F.B.I." Dr. Cochran said that he did not believe the letter had had any direct effect on the committee's final decision about Dr. Starsky, but I don't think it helped him."

The committee had ultimately recommended that Dr. Starsky not be dismissed but the board of regents overruled the committee and the late Harry Newburn, president of the university, and arranged for Dr. Starsky to take a one-year sabbatical from which "he would not return." Dr. Sparsky has contended in a law suit that he has been unable to find work as a professor since then and is now working in research.

In a final memorandum released by the F.B.I., the Phoenix office reported that an informant "advised that the various charges against Starsky brought out during this hearing and other anonymous charges received by the faculty committee members greatly tarnished Starsky's reputation and standing in the academic community."