

KELLEY NOTES DROP IN SECURITY CASES

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F.B.I. Head Reports 97% Decline

Since 1973 in Investigation of
Radical Activities in U.S.

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 22—Clarence M. Kelley, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, disclosed today that, over the last three years, the number of American citizens and organizations under investigation because of their political ideologies has declined from 21,414 to 626, a drop of 97 percent.

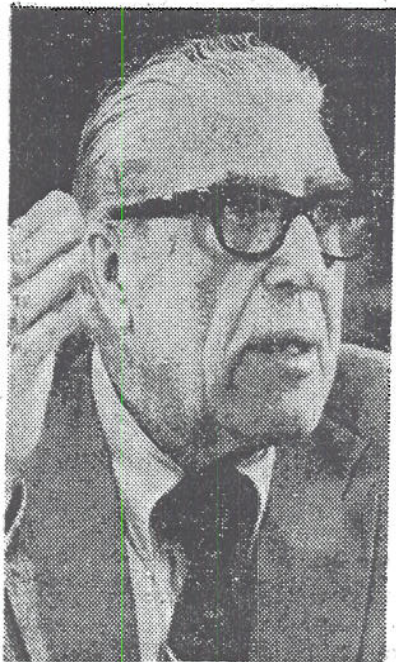
But, under questioning before the new Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Mr. Kelley conceded that the small number of "domestic security" cases that remained were still being investigated under special criteria and not, as he had previously promised, like ordinary criminal matters.

In a statement before what one member of the committee termed the first "routine public oversight hearing" into the F.B.I.'s intelligence operations in more than half a century, Mr. Kelley attributed the decline in the number of domestic security cases under investigation to a complex mixture of factors.

War Called 'Major Cause'

The end of the Vietnam war, he noted, had eliminated "a major cause for divisiveness in this country" and had lessened "the potential for violence" among groups that had opposed the war, with the result that "the F.B.I. began closing thousands of investigations at that time."

Other investigations, he said, had been closed after the Justice Department issued guidelines last March governing



The New York Times/George Tamer

Clarence M. Kelley, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, testifying yesterday before Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

which groups and individuals could be investigated by the bureau and for how long. Still others, like the bureau's 38-year inquiry into the Socialist Workers Party, had been ended by a special review committee of the Justice Department.

Mr. Kelley said that some of the 626 current cases, which involve investigations of 78 organizations and 548 persons, had not yet been reviewed by the committee, and added that he expected still further reductions by the time that process was complete.

The reductions thus far had been made possible, he told the committee, "largely because we have discontinued investigations of rank and file members" of organizations in favor of focusing on the activities of the groups as a whole, their leadership and those members who have indicated their willingness "to use force or violence in violation of Federal law."

Remaining Cases Transferred

Mr. Kelley told the committee that, partly out of the F.B.I.'s concern for "the rights and privacy of our citizens, including their sacred right of legitimate dissent," he had ordered that the remaining domestic security cases be transferred from the bureau's intelligence division to its general crimes section.

In announcing that transfer last month, Mr. Kelley said it was being done so that domestic intelligence cases could henceforth be treated like "all other criminal cases" under the bureau's jurisdiction.

Today, he noted that although "domestic security cases differ in some respects from ordinary criminal investigations, these cases should be tied as closely as possible to actual or potential violations of Federal law."

Mr. Kelley told the committee that the potential threat to the security of the nation posed by some radical and revolutionary groups put their cases "beyond the pale of the general criminal investigation." The need to investigate such groups' intentions in order to prevent hostile acts before they occur, he said, "somewhat submerges the need to prosecute."

I.R.S. Mail Openings Charged

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22 (UPI)—The Church of Scientology says it has proof that it has been the target of mail openings by the Internal Revenue Service. The proof, a spokesman said, is a stack of opened letters.

Hugh Wilhere, Washington spokesman for the church, produced what he said were photocopies of several postmarked envelopes with notations showing they were "missent" to I.R.S. offices and "opened by mistake."

"In the last year and a half, the Church of Scientology has been the subject of approximately 75 incidents of what can only be termed mail tampering," the church said in a statement.

Postal Service inspectors and the House Postal Facilities Subcommittee have looked into the situation, spokesmen said, and both now want to see the original envelopes shown in the photocopies.

"At this point we have no definitive evidence to support their position," the subcommittee spokesman said. "We are continuing to look into the situation. The Postal Service has totally denied it."