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Senate Panel Holds Vast 'Subversives' File Amassed by

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 6 — A secret collection of reports on 125,000 allegedly subversive persons and organizations, the product of an extensive but unofficial intelligence operation that ranged across the nation for 23 years, is locked away today in the office of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee here.

How the collection got there is known. But what it will be used for remains hidden. The subcommittee, which is headed by Senator James O. Eastland, Democrat of Mississippi, has refused to say what it intends to do with the reports.

The collection is known to insiders here as the Van Deman files. It was assembled—with official knowledge and help—by a former Army chief of intelligence, Maj. Gen. Ralph H. Van Deman, between 1929, the year of his retirement, and 1952, the year of his death.

Suspected Many

The files contain information on politicians, labor leaders, civil rights activists, actors, writers, academicians and ordinary citizens, many of them still alive, all of whom General Van Deman suspected of subversion.

Among those still prominent whose dossiers are in the files is Representative Emanuel Celler, Democrat of Brooklyn, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. He was listed as a "Jew playing the Reds."

Mr. Celler could not be reached for comment. But a staff aide here said he was probably unaware that his name was in the Van Deman files. The aide said it was not surprising that Mr. Celler should be named since "he has been attacked by right-wingers for years."

Others listed in the files were Pearl Buck, the author; Joan Crawford and Helen Hayes, the actresses; former Representative Adam Clayton Powell of Manhattan, and Linus Pauling, the Nobel Prize chemist. Attempts to reach each for comment were unsuccessful. The name of Chien Hsueh-sen is also in the files. He is a scientist who went to Communist China in 1955 after being accused of being an alien Communist. He now heads the Chinese missile development program.

Confidential Reports

The heart of the Van Deman files, according to military sources who have seen them, comprises confidential intelligence reports that General Van Deman obtained regularly from Army and Naval intelligence and from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He also received information from California police agencies at his home in San Diego.

Moreover, the general ran a nationwide network of informants, each identified only by a coded number, who reported great volumes of raw information to him. The files show that some information could have come only from agents who infiltrated the Communist party, labor unions, church groups and other organizations.

The general himself appears to have stayed very much out of the public eye and out of political activity. Instead, he fed the intelligence he developed to the F.B.I. and the military intelligence agencies.

General Van Deman—the



Ralph H. Van Deman

agencies, until 1968, to check on possible subversives. Another portion went to a private library in San Diego, where they were used, until 1962, to screen applicants for California state jobs.

Last March, the Army's collection of the Van Deman files was passed on to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, according to a letter from J. Fred Buzhardt, general counsel of the Department of Defense, to Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., chairman of a subcommittee investigating Army surveillance of civilians.

The security subcommittee's chief counsel, J. G. Sourwine, declined to acknowledge that the subcommittee had the files in hand. A spokesman for Senator Eastland, however, did acknowledge it and said the files would not be opened to public inspection.

According to the military sources who have seen the Van Deman files, they are divided into four parts, of which the investigative section is the most important.

An Army memorandum written after an inspection of the files last winter said that General Van Deman's "ability to obtain information and the extent of his liaison [with Federal agencies] are perhaps the most striking features of the files."

Information on Request

"He regularly received classified domestic intelligence reports from the Army and the Navy," the memorandum said.

"The number of F.B.I. summaries, reports and photographs indicates that he could upon request obtain information from the bureau."

A spokesman for the F.B.I. contended, however, that those reports could not have come directly from the bureau, which, he said, does not give out information to unauthorized persons.

The Army memorandum continued: "It is also evident that Van Deman had an unknown number of investigators working directly for him." It said, "They attended meetings and reported to him via unsigned reports annotated by a symbol, such as 109-H, the code for a particular agent or source."

The memorandum concluded that "the extent, detail and quality of information obtained by Van Deman is remarkable."

A second section of the files is a fairly complete set of allegedly Communist and Communist-affiliated newspapers, now defunct, on the West Coast. The Army memorandum said, "It is reasonable to believe that some of these papers may be available from no other source."

A third section, said the memorandum, is a "remarkably complete" collection of largely out-of-print pamphlets and books, written by supposed Communists, that historical researchers might not be able to get anywhere else.

Labor and Civil Rights

Lastly, the Van Deman files include hundreds of pictures of alleged subversives, plus some pictures of General Van Deman's own agents.

Those who have examined the files said that the general's initial attention focused on supposed Communists. A secondary concern was the labor movement, which General Van Deman thought to be heavily infiltrated by Communists.

But by the late 1940's, the general's interest shifted to the



Emanuel Celler

civil rights movement. He was said to have thought that racial unrest in the nation was largely fomented by the Communist party.

The Army inspection of the files last winter indicated that some of his reports had been lent to the Army and the F.B.I. A spokesman for the F.B.I. acknowledged that the bureau had borrowed Van Deman reports and said that this was proper, since a citizen had an obligation to report information he thought might be useful to the bureau.

Among the reports signed out to the Fifth Army and the F.B.I. in 1961 were those on a Communist meeting, a meeting of the adult discussion class at the First Unitarian Church in San Diego, a union meeting of the Lodge K of the Aircraft Lodge 1125, and a Democratic rally at Roosevelt Junior High

School, all in California in 1944.

The Van Deman files also contain a letter, dated in May, 1951, from an agent in Saudi Arabia. It went into detail on the Middle East situation at the time, then asked for a man experienced in operating a wireless and in using small arms. The man requested was also to have been knowledgeable on the latest movements within the Communist world.

General Was a Surgeon

General Van Deman was initially an Army surgeon but went into intelligence in the Philippines in 1908 under Gen. Arthur MacArthur. Gen. Douglas MacArthur's father, General Van Deman was head of military intelligence in Washington from May, 1917, to June, 1918. During that period, he was instrumental in organizing units of volunteer civilian sleuths, such as the American Protective League, that kept watch for signs of disloyalty and reported to military intelligence.

Those contacts appear to have continued during the rest of his Army career and after his retirement in 1929. These volunteer sleuths may have been among the agents he used in his private network of informants. It is not known whether any of his informants were paid.

Not much is known about General Van Deman himself. Being a professional intelligence officer, he kept out of sight. But he appears to have been a persistent, even dogged man. Once, during World War I, other officers scoffed at him for being too security-conscious.

He therefore had their desks rifled of confidential papers at night and called them up the next morning to ask where the papers were. Stricter security controls were quickly set up. The general also appears to

Ex-Chief of Army Intelligence

have deeply feared that the United States would be subverted by foreign powers unless it maintained an extensive internal and external intelligence service. Over the years his focus shifted from fears of a German conspiracy to one initiated by the Soviet Union.

He apparently was able to persuade others in high places of his view. When he began his private operation in 1926, he was supported by the Army, which gave him two civilian employes, filing cabinets and working materials. His wife also assisted him.

The major portion of the files were taken over by the Sixth Army headquarters in 1952, after General Van Deman's death, and shipped to Fort Holabird, Md., in 1963. There they were integrated into the United States Army Investigative Records Repository; the Army's master file of personnel investigations.

Key Index Missing

The Van Deman files at Fort Holabird, however, were segregated from the repository in 1963 and the card-file index destroyed, making the files difficult to use except by laborious search. The key index, identifying the general's agents and sources, also disappeared, according to military sources.

Last winter, when the Army came under fire for its surveillance of civilians, the Van Deman files were inspected by Army officials from the Pentagon. The report from the inspectors to senior Army officials said, "There may be some embarrassment to the Army because of the information contained on labor and civil rights movements. The question of the Army's relationship to Van Deman could also be embarrassing."

The inspectors recommended that the Van Deman files be given to Army historians because "the value of these documents from an historical aspect is unquestionable, particularly from the standpoint of methodology."

But senior civilian officials of the Army felt that the files were politically too hot. They arranged; military sources said, for Senator Eastland to ask for the files, which were then delivered to his subcommittee.

Library Gets Files

The delivery was made the day that Robert F. Froehke, then an Assistant Secretary of Defense and now Secretary of the Army, appeared before Senator Ervin's subcommittee to testify on the Army's role in watching civilians.

That way, the military sources said, Mr. Froehke could truthfully say, if asked, that the Army no longer had the Van Deman files. He was not asked.

The portion of the Van Deman files that remained in California was given to the San Diego Research Library set up in 1952 by three of General Van Deman's associates: Maj. Gen. George W. Fisher of the California National Guard; Col. Frank C. Forward, commander of intelligence operations of the California Guard, and Alfredo Loveland, a San Diego businessman. They continued to add information to the files.

The research library files housed in the National Guard Armory in San Diego, were used by Govs. Earl Warren (later Chief Justice of the United States), Goodwin Knight and Edmund G. Brown to check on the backgrounds of prospective state appointees.

In 1962 California's Attorney General, Stanley Mosk, had the research library files seized on grounds that material from them had been used "by unauthorized persons for political purposes." Mr. Nixon, then campaigning against Governor Brown, protested that the legislature should look into the allegedly illegal seizure.

After the San Diego Research Library threatened a court suit, the files were returned. They went into a vault in the San Diego Title Trust and Insurance Company, of which Colonel Forward was an officer.

Colonel Forward was asked recently whether the papers were still in San Diego. "Yes, you can assure that they are," he said, "but I can't tell you where." Asked who was in charge of them, he replied: "I am not at liberty to talk about that."