

FBI Says Its Tactics on Dr. King Unjustified

Washington

The FBI acknowledged yesterday that it could not justify its repeated attempts to discredit the late Dr. Martin Luther King and many of the other victims of its disruptive counterintelligence program.

Assistant FBI Deputy Director James B. Adams told the Senate Intelligence Committee that there were about 25 separate "actions" taken against King in the 1960s, all without any "statutory basis."

Adams repeatedly defended the FBI's undertaking of the investigations — as distinct from disruptive tactics — aimed at King and others, however.

Saying that he could speak freely only in executive session, he said the inquiry concerning King was undertaken in the early '60s in light of suspicions of Communist influence on him or his movement.

The FBI official added that in October, 1963, the late Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy approved the FBI's wiretapping of



JAMES ADAMS
Probes defended.

phones at King's Atlanta home and at Southern Christian Leadership Conference offices in New York and Atlanta. (The FBI bugged King's hotel rooms under a claim of general authority granted in 1954.)

The FBI, however, offered no explanation for continuing to track King and his activities for so many years although the allegations of Communist influence, Adams agreed, were never established.

The tactics against the civil rights leader, who was slain in 1968, included not only the bugging of his hotel rooms and a blackmail letter, but efforts to keep him from meeting with Pope Paul VI, to block him from getting an honorary university degree and even to publicizing him as a "Judas" a few days before he was killed.

Senator Philip A. Hart (Dem-Mich.) said he is just as concerned about the other faceless victims of FBI harassment — from black activists, women's liberationists to anti-war leaders and people wrongly suspected of being Communists.

FBI documents, Hart pointed out, indicated that such people were subjected to efforts to break up their marriages, force them out of their jobs, smear them in the eyes of parents and teachers

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and, in some cases, perhaps even to kill one another.

The Michigan Democrat disclosed, for example, that on Jan. 30, 1969, FBI headquarters approved the mailing of a letter to Jeff Forte, a leader of the Blackstone Rangers gang in Chicago, asserting that the Black Panthers there had "put out a contract on his life."

The FBI's Adams maintained that he is sure such action was taken simply to warn him, but Hart said he still suspected that it was meant "to encourage the Rangers to shoot some or all of the Panthers" in retaliation.

The anonymous mailing, Hart pointed out, was approved on the basis of a memo from the Chicago FBI office saying that it might "intensify the degree of animosity" between the two groups and prompt Forte "to take retaliatory actions."

Other indications of secret FBI incitement to violence, Hart said, included the forging of letters under the signature of local Communist leaders addressed to Mafia-owned businesses and attacking the employment practices of those businesses.

Testifying at a three-hour hearing, Adams said such disruptive tactics are no longer practiced by the Bureau and he seconded the remarks of FBI Director Clarence Kelley who said on NBC's "Today" show yesterday morning that he welcomes more congressional oversight.

Senator Walter F. Mondale (Dem-Minn.) pointed out that "this is the first time in 50 years" that the FBI has been subjected to such public scrutiny. He said the six-month Senate investigation preceding it had shown that the bureau time and again "employed the tactics of totalitarian societies against American citizens."

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