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NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM B-349-B-C

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

March 7, 1975

FOR RELEASE 2:00 p.m.

STATEMENT BY REP. BELLA S. ABZUG (D-L,N.Y.), CHAIRWOMAN, HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

In making public today the file on her which she received earlier in the week from the CIA, Rep. Bella S. Abzug (D-L, N.Y.) said:

"This collection of trivia and inaccurate information and the tampering with my mail are a violation of privacy, my individual Constitutional rights and the law. It also represents a colossal waste of taxpayers money if it is representative of the kind of material that the CIA holds on hundreds of thousands of Americans."

Rep. Abzug also provided comments on the contents of her file.

"In his letter to me enclosing the file, CIA legislative counsel George L. Cary included the following annotations.

"1. Enclosure A, said Mr. Cary, is 'the text of CIA cables reflecting your visit with members of the PRG.' This refers to a trip I and another member of Congress made to Paris in April 1972 to talk with all sides in the lagging Vietnam peace negotiations. We met with representatives of the U.S., the PRG, the South Vietnamese government, the third force, etc. It was a public visit extensively reported in the news media.

"2. Mr. Cary said: 'As part of its foreign intelligence program, from 1953 until February 1973, CIA conducted in the United States and abroad a survey of mail between the United States and certain countries. Some of this mail was opened to determine Communist censorship techniques or to report the content of the correspondence. The survey also provided addresses that might be used for various foreign intelligence programs and information on conditions in the country as well as operational leads for agent recruitment. As far as can be determined, three of your letters were noted as part of this program. Two letters were opened and together with two related references are Enclosure B.'

As an attorney, I represented various people involved in estates claims and this required my writing to the Soviet Union to get information about relatives. By its own admission, the CIA opened private mail from Americans to people in other countries and even used them in an attempt to recruit agents abroad. I have received a personal visit from the Postmaster General, who expressed his extreme concern and outrage at this illegal interference with the U.S. mails."

"3. Enclosure C, said Mr. Cary, 'lists your name in a mailing list of The World Council of Peace.' I assume the (sic) after esquire was supplied by the CIA.

"4. Mr. Cary said: 'Your name appears on a list of persons who were the subject of a study related to possible foreign links with American dissident groups. It was determined that you were not involved in the terms of reference of that study and were not included in it. Enclosure D is a copy of a handwritten notation to this effect.' In effect, the CIA conducted surveillance of the American peace movement in violation of its legal mandate.

"5. Mr. Cary said: 'In March 1971, we received two unclassified reports from another agency in which you are mentioned. These references are in Enclosure E.' This refers to a rally outside the New York City Public Library at which I spoke and called for an end to the war in Vietnam.

"6. Mr. Cary concluded: 'Your name is also mentioned in a number of newspaper articles and other publications or circulars contained in or referenced in Agency files. These publications and circulars are listed in Enclosure F.' These include references to minutes and attendance lists of American peace organizations. The newspaper articles that I have been able to trace reported my domestic activities as a civil liberties attorney, my public speeches, my election campaign, a fund-raising party held for me at Katz's delicatessen and my statements as a member of Congress, including an appeal I made for more humane treatment of mentally retarded children at Willowbrook Hospital."

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