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MAGAZINE WEEK

By Sherwood Ross

The disclosure that the FBI sent a letter to The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. urging him to commit suicide is another fresh proof of how the Federal government is becoming the greatest menace to the life and liberties of the American people.

From the FBI to the IRS, and from the CIA to the Pentagon, agency after agency of the Federal government is committing acts of illegality and wrong-doing that are worthy of a totalitarian society.

In the case of Dr. King, since it now appears incontrovertible that the FBI urged him to kill himself, the question must now be asked whether the FBI played any role in his murder in Memphis in 1968. Far-fetched, you say? If Dr. King had taken his life at the instigation of the viscious letter mailed to him by the FBI, the FBI, at the least, would have been an accomplice in the killing. And the Bureau certainly tried. As Sen. Frank Church (D.-Idaho) said, "That was certainly no Christmas card."

Moreover, the FBI's letter was not an isolated incident. It committed 25 separate acts of harassment, all of them illegal, in its systematic campaign to bring Dr. King down. When these acts failed, Dr. King was mysteriously murdered. Moreover, the FBI considered planting stories that Dr. King was patronizing a white-owned hotel in Memphis. Such stories, conceivably, might have influenced Dr. King to stop at the popular black-owned Lorraine Hotel, where he was in fact murdered by a sniper's bullet for the high crime of stepping out on his balcony.

Not only did the late J. Edgar Hoover hate the popular civil rights leader, but under Hoover the FBI waged a war of disruption and incitement to violence against a number of black protest groups, including Chicago's Blackstone Rangers and Jersey City's Black Panthers. The FBI also -- despite advance warnings that James Meredith was going to be shot on June 6, 1966, in Mississippi -- failed to guard him to prevent the shooting even though its agents were just five minutes from the scene.

The FBI crusade against Dr. King, using tactics of deceit and treachery that would have done justice to the Russian secret police, brings to mind other examples of FBI wrong-doing. Exhibit No. 1 was the FBI's failure to notify the Warren Commission that alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald had been, at the least, contacted by an FBI agent shortly before President Kennedy's murder, and was perhaps a paid FBI informant. Exhibit No. 2 was the FBI's efforts to make Blackstone Ranger chief Jeff Fort think members of his own party were attempting to kill him. The FBI apparently hoped that Fort might stroke first.

It's time for the American people to ask some hard questions:

What role did the FBI play in the murder of Dr. King? Why wasn't he

What was the role, if any, of the FBI in the murder of Sen. Robert Kennedy?
Is it possible that the FBI — once highly revered by the American people —

has become a private, Secret Police force that has been committing crimes to satisfy the illegal whims of its leaders?

Ponder, if you will, the fact — as brought out in a recent issue of The Atlantic Monthly — that J. Edgar Hoover regarded his no. 2 aide as so "unstable" mentally that he felt compelled to fire him. Ponder whether dangerous and demented individuals inside the FBI weren't possibly engaged in a lawless orgy of violence and murder against the civil rights movement's leadership?

Surely, every FBI agent guilty of crimes against Dr. King should be fired and prosecuted to the full extent of the law for these crimes.
Surely, Sen. Church's committee should undertake a sweeping probe of the FBI.

Surely, FBI chief Clarence Kelley should launch his own probe immediately.

Surely, Justice Department head Levi should swing into action to create a probe of his own.

Surely, President Ford should demand action today to clean up the FBI. The irony of ironies in the entire sordid King tragedy was that the FBI was attempting to justify its own crimes on grounds that Dr. King was being influenced by Communists. No proof of those connections has ever surfaced, but assuming that the Communist strategy is to destroy the liberties of the American people, there were a lot of Kremlin dupes in the FBI headquarters building in Washington, D.C., and El Dupo No. 1 was J. Edgar Hoover.