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The File on Martin Luther King Jr.

There's no need to wait 35 years; the Justice Department has already looked into it.

Neither President Reagan nor Sen. Jesse Helms need wait 35 years for an appraisal of the sealed FBI files on Martin Luther King Jr. That job was done in 1976 by a task force appointed by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility and charged by Attorney General Edward H. Levi with examining the relationship between the FBI and King.

The resulting "Report of the Department of Justice Task Force to Review the FBI Martin Luther King, Jr., Security and Assassination Investigations" was submitted to the attorney general on Jan. 11, 1977. It is a public document. It demonstrates that King was no Communist.

The Justice task force examined more than 200,000 entries (serials) in the FBI files. These included, in addition to the routine investigative report files, the so-called Official and Confidential files kept in J. Edgar Hoover's office, "sensitive" records in the FBI's Security Division office and the files of former assistant director William Sullivan.

The review by the task force covered selected portions of all the transcripts of tapes of the extensive electronic surveillance (bugging) of King conducted by the bureau. Parts of the tapes that were spot-checked against the transcripts verified their substantial accuracy. The material did not deal with politics or philosophical views; it was of a personal nature and highly irrelevant.

From the FBI files covering the six years of investigation of King before his death, the attorney general's task force learned that prior to 1963 there were among King's advisers two who were characterized by the bureau as Communist Party members. One of these was reported to be a "ranking" party personage. One of the alleged Communists gave sub-

stantial advice and help, which King accepted. The other was of some minor use to King.

The FBI files did not demonstrate that the advice from either of the reported Communists was dictated by the Communist Party USA or was inimical to the interests of the United States. But the files did show that the bureau learned in early 1963, through sources considered reliable, that the principal adviser had disassociated himself from the CPUSA because the Communist Party was not sufficiently involving itself in race relations and the civil rights movement.

The task force concluded that the very lengthy concentration of the FBI investigation on Communist advisers revealed only that King was not "sold" any course

of conduct that can be identified as Communist or "party line."

Finally, at a conference on Sept. 2, 1977, it was stated by representatives of the FBI's Intelligence Division to the task force that as of that date the FBI had no evidence whatever that King was ever Communist or affiliated with the Communist Party USA. And the task force found that King never varied publicly or privately from his commitment to nonviolence. He did not advocate the overthrow of the government of the United States by violence or subversion. On the contrary, he advocated an end to the discrimination against and disenfranchisement of minority groups, evils that the Constitution and the courts have denounced in terms as strong as his.

This is a fair summary of the report of Attorney General Levi's task force as it relates to the issue of King's politics. Be assured, Mr. President, the King holiday will not celebrate a Communist.

The writer was a senior member of the Attorney General's Task Force to Review the FBI Martin Luther King, Jr., Security and Assassination Investigations.



By Meyer for the San Francisco Chronicle

JESSE HELMS REVEALS STARTLING NEW EVIDENCE LINKING MARTIN LUTHER KING TO MARXISM