

Addendum notes: On OPR Investigation into MLK

Now some of you may remember in the 1980s there was a movement to make King's birthday a national holiday.

President Reagan and Senator Jessie Helms (the nation's most precious resource) registered some concern because they argued that all the facts were not in about whether King was or was not a communist or a dupe of the American CP.

Of course we had come to expect this from Helms. And President Reagan had such a sterling record of being misinformed about so many things--he was our greatest negative barometer--perhaps that's why we loved so because he was so fallible, it made the rest of us feel just a little superior.)

What both men failed to remember or accept was that this whole question was looked into by the federal government, the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between King and the FBI. In short, to see if the FBI had contributed in any way to poisoning the public mind about King and thereby increasing the possibility of his assassination.

The OPR examined more than 200,000 FBI documents. Its conclusion on the Communist issue was that King never a communist nor was he ever "sold" on any course that could be identified as Communist or "party line." That the FBI never had any evidence to the contrary. That King never varied publicly or privately from his commitment to nonviolence or advocate the overthrow of the US by violence or subversion. On the contrary he advocated an end to discrimination and to disenfranchisement of minority groups, evils that the Constitution and national policy also advocated in the strongest terms.

The OPR report was made public on January 11, 1977. It was signed by the then Attorney General Edward H. Levi.