

Hoover FBI

icance—no smoking gun, no significant self-revelations. Just raw and vulgar sex talk.)

Our surveillance of King began in 1962, when Hoover sent a letter to Attorney General Robert Kennedy to inform him that one of King's closest advisors was Stanley D. Levison, an alleged member of the Communist party, USA. Reliable sources had confirmed that Levison had written a speech King had delivered to the AFL-CIO convention in Miami a month earlier. We also had evidence that Levison had advised King on such matters as organization, administrative procedures, political strategy, tax matters, and speeches. Levison had prepared press statements for King to give to the news media concerning such controversial issues as race riots and the Vietnam War. He even helped King raise money by arranging musical concerts for the benefit of the SCLC.

We learned about Levison's influence on King from very reliable informants—two brothers who were key figures in the National Committee of the Communist party. These brothers, Morris and Jack Childs, were ostensibly communists who had joined the American Communist party and moved up the ladder of its hierarchy, rung by rung, over a twenty-eight-year period. In fact, the Childs brothers, both trained in Russia by the Soviets, were double agents working for the United States government. In the eyes of the Soviets they were so trustworthy that they became the conduit for secret funds (more than a million dollars annually) funneled to the American branch of the party from its big brother in Moscow. Every year a Childs brother would travel abroad, pick up the cash, and smuggle it back into the United States. Needless to say, neither one was ever caught by U.S. customs, so their credibility with the Soviets increased as the years rolled by.

We nevertheless used the information they passed along with great discretion. We knew about virtually every high-level initiative the communists launched, but we made certain that our words and actions never revealed the true measure of that knowledge, since, as a rule, it was more important to have reliable informants in the top echelons of the party than to take action on the specific intelligence we received.

The case of Stanley Levison was an exception to that rule. Jack