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Washington Post  
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Dear Mr. Johnson,

Your excellent Outlook piece suggests a ~~followup~~<sup>king</sup>, the untold story of the magnitude of the FBI's campaigns against Dr. ~~xxxx~~ and its enormous cost.

After years of FBI resistance in C.A. 75-1996 it was finally required to give me xeroxes of the (incomplete) inventory of the holdings of the 59 field offices. The inventory alone runs to 404 pages and is incomplete. For the most part each inventory records the number of documents, not pages - and they boggle the mind.

At that they do not include a single tape and if my recollection is correct, not a single transcript of any tape. Nor do they include FBIHQ records.

While I know of no way in which a cost or time estimate can be made, I am certain that both in dollars and man-hours the wasted cost of this evil is astronomical - and it was indulged in when crime and drug problems were increasing at a great rate.

In the end, as you may recall, in a brief moment of immediately regretted honesty William Sullivan told Hoover that this immense accumulation proved nothing at all.

Just a few days ago I tried to interest George Lardner in this, as I had years ago when I obtained these records. I presume he found desk opposition.

For the most part the FBI puts what it is required to give me in its reading room if for no other reason in an effort to deny me first use. It ought be a simple matter to either examine this inventory or for \$40 the Post can get xeroxes from the FBI. It and other relevant records are available here, of course.

Other relevant records include a small part of the CIA's companion operations and how the FBI, while pretending a no-stones-urned search for the Department or for the Congress manages to circumscribe searches and reporting to hide the most embarrassing, like the tapes in this instance.

From your opening I presume your source was DeLoach or one of his assistants. If you ever want to explore his files (and perhaps operations) about you and/or the Post, you can get them under FOIA and after they initially stonewall you, ask for a search of the 94 file classification, which is where they hide such things under the misleading title "Research Matters." DeLoach was quite an operator. He even convinced LBJ that the JFK assassination was a CIA plot. Which is another untold story.

Best wishes,

Harold Weisberg

# A Generation-Old Crusade to Destroy

In late 1965 or early 1966 I received a call from a top aide of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. This person had been helpful earlier in stories about the civil rights struggles in the South and especially about FBI knowledge of leaders of the Ku Klux Klan there. He asked if I could drop by his office in the Justice Department, near Hoover's suite, where the FBI was housed then.

When I arrived, shortly before noon, I was shown a pile of documents lying on a table before a couch. I was welcome to take my time and read through them, making notes, but under a stipulation that the meeting then occurring "never took place." The aide then left me alone with the documents.

They were about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. After I finished going through them, another FBI aide escorted me to the elevator. He told me that anything I could write to expose King for what he was would be a great service to the American people. In other words, discredit him.

The material I had seen consisted of raw, and no doubt selective, FBI files. They were filled with accounts of surveillance and supposition, from anonymous sources, with allusions to communist contacts, communist associations, communist penetration. There were also, as I remember, ma-

terials allegedly linking King and the American antiwar movement to communist control and associations with communist front groups around the world.

This was at a time when King, who won the Nobel Peace Prize a year before, had begun to take a strong public position against our expanding combat role in Vietnam. His criticism of U.S. troops being in Vietnam came amid intensifying dissent about the war. Influential politicians and public figures were beginning to question—and directly challenge—President Lyndon B. Johnson's policies with a force that eventually led to his departure from the White House.

Aside from hearsay, gossip, and anonymous allegations, I saw nothing in the FBI materials about King that would warrant publishing a story. The real story was the campaign to destroy King's public credibility through selective leaks to the press. For, as it quickly became known, that and similar material were being peddled vigorously by the FBI to other Washington reporters. It was slimy business at best, and in retrospect grows even more so.

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I exhume these old bones now because of the latest attempt to defame and discredit King.

It is an even more obscene effort now because it necessitates poking through the

garbage of raw files about a man murdered 15 years ago and once more raising an old, unsubstantiated story.

The rationale for this posthumous investigation of King is that it is necessary because of the forthcoming congressional vote on whether to proclaim a national holiday in his honor. That is sophistry of the worst sort. The FBI material now being produced, and being sought, is part of the same old stuff that has been moldering for nearly a generation. It has been aired over

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## Haynes Johnson

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### SMEAR

and over again, not the least in congressional testimony and investigations in years past.

There is something sick about this newest smear campaign launched by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and members of the Conservative Caucus. It betrays a desperate need to destroy a reputation at whatever cost, and says more about the motivations of those who indulge in it than it does about the character of the person they still despise even in death.

Some of the material now coming to



## King's Name at Any Cost

light reveals that state of mind all too clearly. Here, for example, is a "secret" FBI memo written on June 29, 1965, about a conversation during a golf game between a source whose name is blacked out and two unnamed persons. Under the heading "MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. SECURITY MATTER—COMMUNIST," it begins:

"We have just obtained information by chance which, if proven true, will give us a golden opportunity to discredit King."

Another, written at the end of 1964, details the FBI and Hoover's concern about King's "criticism of the FBI over the past several years." Six typewritten pages are devoted to "Martin Luther King's Criticism of the Director and FBI" and "Organization of the Current Attack Against the FBI by Martin Luther King."

Still another, early in 1965, just as the great civil rights struggle that resulted in passage of the historic Voting Rights Act was beginning in Selma, Ala., came from an anonymous person in Selma. The informant said he possessed a telegram addressed to Selma's police chief that read, with unintentional humor:

"I HAVE PROOF LUTHER [sic] KING MET WITH COMMUNISTS IN HOTEL ROOM AT OSLO, NORWAY. ALSO KING PAID \$500 TO HOTEL CLERK AT FINLAND CITY FOR PUBLICATION [sic] TO HAVE BREAKFAST

SERVED IN BED BY WHITE WAITRESS IN BIKINI SUIT. NORWEGIAN SEAMAN GAVE ME SIGNED DOCUMENTS."

It makes you wonder which the FBI informant thought to be more subversive, the communists or the white woman in the bikini?

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The saddest part of this sorry story involves something other than the character, beliefs or associations of Martin Luther King, Jr. It has to do with an attempt to rewrite history.

Behind the need to destroy a reputation lies an even greater need—to prove that what happened in the civil rights struggles of the South and the dissent against the war in Vietnam occurred only because of alien subversive influences. They weren't really American impulses springing out of our best traditions of fairness, justice, compassion and equality of all before the law. They were impulses manipulated by sinister outside forces.

Implicit in that attitude is a contempt for the true character and quality of the American people, not just for that of a black minister who gave voice to some of the oldest American ideals. In the end, this episode does not damage King's reputation or the cause he represented. It serves only to bring discredit on those who engage in it.