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New Evidence Ties FBI
To King Assassination

On March 4, 1968, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover issued a directive to all FBI agents instructing them to "prevent the rise of a 'messiah' who could unify and electrify the militant black nationalist movement." Malcolm X "might have been such a 'messiah,'" the memo said. "He is the martyr of the movement today." Continuing, Hoover wrote that Martin Luther King Jr. "could be a real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed 'obedience' to 'white liberal doctrines.'"

Exactly one month later, on April 4, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

This and similar evidence has surfaced in recent months, strengthening charges that the FBI was involved in a conspiracy leading to King's death and has maintained a cover-up of events surrounding the murder ever since.

The evidence falls generally into two categories: 1) revelations of an FBI campaign stemming back to the early sixties to "neutralize" King and destroy his influence; and 2) details of FBI ties to events surrounding the murder itself.

FBI "War" on King

In its report released earlier this year, the Senate Committee on Intelligence Activities documented an FBI "war" against King from 1963 until his death in 1968. According to the Committee "nearly every intelligence gathering technique" was used in an "extensive surveillance program." It found that the FBI's acts, including an attempt to provoke King into suicide, "violated the law and fundamental human decency."

The Committee's description of the campaign contains repeated references to Hoover's hatred for King, the Bureau's determination to "destroy" him and a willingness to use whatever methods it found necessary. In discussing the opening of the campaign, Assistant FBI Director William Sullivan wrote in 1964 that King must be taken "off his pedestal," adding, "It can and will be done." Testifying before the Senate Com-

mittee, Sullivan said "no holds were barred" in the effort. When civil rights leaders James Farmer and Roy Wilkins visited the Bureau in the mid-sixties to seek an end to the FBI's harassment of King, they were told, "If King wants war we [are] prepared to give it to him."

The Senate Committee also heard testimony from former Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach. Katzenbach said that while other government officials did not know all the specifics of the FBI's campaign against King, they were generally aware of it. He told the Committee, "Nobody in the Department of Justice connected with Civil Rights could possibly have been unaware of Mr. Hoover's feelings [against King]. Nobody could have been unaware of the potential for disaster which those feelings embodied."

The Committee concluded "that the 'potential for disaster' was indeed clear at the time. There is no question that officials in the White House and Justice Department, including President Johnson and Attorney General Katzenbach, knew that the

Bureau was taking steps to discredit Dr. King...."

FBI Tie-ins to Assassination

It is against this background that new details about the events surrounding the actual murder must be viewed. Lawyer Mark Lane, who has challenged the official versions of both the Kennedy and King assassinations, recently disclosed details of an interview with a former FBI agent, Arthur Murtagh, who discussed some of those facts.

Murtagh, who spent 20 years with the Bureau, worked in the Atlanta office that had been the center of much of the anti-King activity. He said, "The number two desk in that office, the intelligence squad, was charged with the responsibility of destroying Dr. King." It was the Atlanta office that organized the wiretaps, fake letters and tapes as well as other parts of the campaign. According to Murtagh, the Atlanta agents "literally jumped for joy" when they heard King had been shot.

Nevertheless it was this same office that Hoover assigned to "investigate" King's death after the assassination.

Another tie-in involves the Memphis Police and Fire Director Frank Holloman. Before taking the Memphis post, Holloman spent 25 years as an FBI officer. He was responsible for assigning just two security officers to guard King when he came to the city in 1968.

One of those officers, Ed Redditt, was assigned at the request of King's aides, who knew and trusted him. But just hours before the assassination, Holloman ordered Redditt off the case. He told Redditt that a threat had been made on his life and he was to go home. Redditt protested, but was

taken home by two other officers.

Meanwhile, King was shot and killed. Redditt never heard anything further about the alleged death threat used as an excuse to send him home.

Lone Assassin?

These and more revelations all work to undermine the official theory that King was murdered by a lone assassin, James Earl Ray. Ray's own case provides a host of evidence refuting that theory as well. It was only when his lawyer warned him of a "sure death sentence" unless he cooperated that Ray pleaded guilty. Later on, however, he claimed that he had indeed been involved in a conspiracy and sought a new trail. The request was denied.

All this evidence is more than just fuel for conspiracy theories. It's indicative of the giant strides toward a repressive police state which the U.S. ruling class has already made. The Senate report itself was forced to acknowledge that while it focused on King's case "because it demonstrates just how far the government could go in a secret war against one citizen...it should not be forgotten that the Bureau carried out disruptive activities against hundreds of lesser-known American citizens."

Even more important is the realization that for all these revelations and disclosures, the state's repressive agencies and the social system that makes them necessary remain very much intact.

—S.K.