

F. B. I. Is Accused of Trying to Manipulate News Media

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times
WASHINGTON, APRIL 28—

The Federal Bureau of Investigation repeatedly and covertly attempted to manipulate the news media in an effort to influence public opinion and discredit citizens and organizations that were its "targets," the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities reported today.

The committee's report on domestic intelligence activities presented evidence of pervasive and frequently successful efforts by the F. B. I. to use the news media to attack such targets as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and groups and individuals in what are described as the "new left."

Following are examples from the report of ways in which the F. B. I. sought to influence reports of the news media:

¶Through a "good friend" who was chairman of the board of a national magazine, the bureau killed an unfavorable article about the bureau that was scheduled to appear in the magazine.

¶F. B. I. officials approached reporters, including one from a major magazine, and offered to play tape recordings "embarrassing" to Dr. King.

¶A freelance writer was furnished by the bureau with pho-

tographs depicting a radical group's apartment as "a shambles with lewd, obscene and revolutionary slogans displayed on the walls."

¶The Washington bureau chief of a major news organization was allegedly given discrediting information about the lawyer defending Dr. Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon papers case.

¶The F. B. I.'s efforts to use the news media were generally part of the bureau's counterintelligence program, designed to "disrupt" or "neutralize" people or groups considered a threat to domestic security. But the report indicates that the F. B. I. also sought to use the news media to disseminate its own views on such issues as foreign policy and sexual morality.

A frequent technique used by the bureau was to plant news articles through "friendly" reporters, editors and executives. The bureau also used its contacts in the media to suppress articles that were deemed unfriendly to the bureau or otherwise regarded as undesirable.

The report said that the bureau's crime records division maintained "covert" liaison with the news media to advance two main domestic intelligence objectives: (1) providing derogatory information to the media intended to generally

discredit the activities or ideas of targeted groups or individuals, and (2) disseminating favorable articles, news releases and background information in order to disrupt particular activities.

At the committee's hearings, a former director of the crime records division, Thomas E. Bishop, testified that he kept a list of the bureau's "press friends" in his desk. He also said that the F. B. I. sometimes refused to cooperate with reporters who were critical of the bureau or its director.

Mr. Bishop said that, as a general rule, the bureau gave out only "public record information," but that this could cover almost everything in the files "on a targeted individual."

Dr. King, the civil rights leader who was assassinated in 1968, was a frequent object of F. B. I. "news leaks," according to the report. It alleged that the bureau offered to play for reporters tape recordings that were said to be "embarrassing" to Dr. King—presumably involving a sex episode.

The report stated that in November 1964, the Washington bureau chief of a "national news publication" told Nicholas B. Katzenbach, who was then Attorney General, that one of his reporters had been approached by the F. B. I. and offered a chance to listen to "in-

teresting" tape recordings involving Dr. King.

Benjamin C. Bradlee, now executive editor of The Washington Post, confirmed to a question today that when he was bureau chief of Newsweek magazine in 1964 he informed Mr. Katzenbach of the offer made to one of his reporters.

The report generally did not divulge the names of the journalists or news media executives who were in contact with the F. B. I.

According to the Senate findings, the F. B. I. maintained a close relationship with the chairman of a national magazine described in a bureau memorandum as "our good friend." The report said that the bureau took advantage of the relationship with the unidentified executive to "squench" an unfavorable article to postpone publication of an article on an F. B. I. Case and forestall publication of an article written by Dr. King.

Following are some other examples cited in the report of attempted manipulation of the news media by the F. B. I.:

¶F. B. I. headquarters asked its field offices to provide the press with specific data depicting the scurrilous and depraved nature of many of the characters, activities, habits political or other improper purposes, including discrediting op-

ponents or critics.

¶The bureau ordered field offices to gather information that would disprove allegations by "the liberal press, the bleeding hearts and the forces on the left," that the Chicago police used undue force against demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

¶Several months after the Comintpro operations were supposed to have ended, the F. B. I. attempted to discredit Leonard Boudin, the lawyer defending Dr. Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon papers case, by disclosing to the Washington bureau chief of a major news service information about Mr. Boudin's alleged sympathy for "communist causes."

¶The bureau placed in a newspaper an article by a wealthy Negro industrialist that purported "to give the lie to the Communist conard that the Negro is downtrodden and has no opportunities in America." The bureau also aided the publication of articles supporting the war in Vietnam.

As one of its recommendations, the committee urged that intelligence agencies be prohibited from disseminating information to the news media for political or other improper purposes, including discrediting opponents or critics.