

Senate Intelligence Panel Told of F. B. I. Attempt to Discredit Dr. King in 1964

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—The Federal Bureau of Investigation sent a note and a tape recording to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in late 1964 that the black leader came to believe was an effort to drive him to suicide, according to testimony and documents presented today to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

In November 1964, only 34 days before Dr. King was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, he received a note and a tape recording from an anonymous source, the material showed. The tape recording was of allegedly unsavory activities engaged in by Dr. King, according to committee sources.

The tape recording was accompanied by an unsigned note that read: "King, there is only one thing left for you to do. You know what it is. You have just 34 days in which to do it. (This exact number has been selected for a specific reason.) It has definite practical significance. You are done. There is but one way out for you."

Bugged by F. B. I. The committee staff has established that the tape recording was obtained from an electronic surveillance device placed by the F. B. I. and then sent to Dr. King by F. B. I. officials. The material presented by the committee staff also showed that F. B. I. officials wrote the note.

It was part of six-year effort to discredit the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, according to testimony. A month after the tape was mailed, the F. B. I. securely sent another tape, possibly of the same incident, to Dr. King's wife, Mrs. Coretta Scott King. The committee staff confirmed that mailing was reported earlier this year.

Mrs. King had said that she and her husband had listened to the second tape and had concluded that there was nothing on it that would discredit Dr. King.

The report on Dr. King and other facets of the F. B. I.'s domestic intelligence operations were presented to the committee verbally by its counsel, F. A. O. Schwarz 3d, and the minority counsel, Kurt Smothers, in a five-hour hearing.

Mr. Schwarz told the committee that the staff had discovered a memorandum to the late J. Edgar Hoover, the F. B. I. director, from William Sullivan, then the bureau's chief of counterintelligence, suggesting that the F. B. I. discredit Dr. King by "knocking him off his pedestal." This plan was adopted, Mr. Schwarz said.

The bureau instituted 16 separate wiretaps and bugged eight rooms in an attempt to trace Dr. King's movements and activities, and these produced "thousands of hours" of tapes, Mr. Schwarz said. Each time Dr. King appeared to be getting public recognition—the Nobel Peace Prize, the Civil Rights march on Washington in 1963, the poor peoples campaign and being picked Man of the Year by Time magazine—the F. B. I. redoubled its efforts to "discredit or destroy" the black leader, Mr. Schwarz said.

Yet, he contended, there is no indication that the F. B. I. ever established that Dr. King was a national security threat, threatened public violence or was a criminal suspect.

Reports Rewritten

Moreover, the committee staff testimony showed, Mr. Hoover ordered other officials to rewrite reports indicating that Dr. King was apparently not a threat to the country. The officials changed their reports, the staff members testified, out of fear of losing jobs.

The F. B. I. dogged Dr. King until just before his death, the staff testimony showed. Michael Epstein, a member of the staff who conducted much of the investigation on the King matter, said that a few days before Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968, the bureau had plotted to discredit him by leaking a report to the press that he was staying in a white-owned motel instead of a hotel operated by blacks, Dr. King was leading a boycott of white merchants in a strike by city sanitation workers at the time.

Mr. Epstein said there was no indication in F. B. I. documents that the bureau had leaked the report, but he added that such an account did run in several newspapers. On Dr. King's last visit to Memphis, he registered at the black-owned Lorraine Hotel where he was killed.

The committee staff members said they could find no justification for the bureau's attack on Dr. King. It appeared to them, they said, from his criticism of the F. B. I. for posing conservative Southern agents to field offices in the South at a time when civil rights workers were under attack.

The F. B. I. used its surveillance of Dr. King in August 1964, the staff members said, as part of a secret intrusion into the Democratic National Convention at Atlantic City.

In a report on the activities of the "special squad" at the convention that was made public today, Cartha D. DeLoach, the chief of the bureau's crime records division, noted that "through our highly confidential coverage of Martin Luther King (deletion), together with similar coverage we established on the headquarters of CORE-S.N.C.C., we were in a position to advise the White House in advance of all plans made by these two sources in an effort to disrupt the orderly progress

The words "highly confidential coverage" are an F. B. I. euphemism for electronic surveillance, according to testimony and documents.

Johnson Aides 'Counseled' In the same report, Mr. DeLoach noted that, by "counseling" aides to President Johnson, "we convinced them that they must make major changes in controlling admissions into the convention hall and thereby preclude infiltration of the illegal Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates in large numbers into the space reserved for the regular Mississippi delegates."

An internal investigation of the bureau's role at the 1964 convention made earlier this year disclosed that the F. B. I. had obtained press credentials from NBC and that their agents, posing as newsmen, conducted interviews with people at the Freedom Party's headquarters. Mr. Schwarz also bugged today that Dr. King was also bugged at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco in 1964.

The F. B. I.'s campaign against Dr. King was not unique, the committee staff testified. They produced documents disclosing that the bureau had used forged letters in an attempt to cause marital trouble among leaders of black militant groups and the Ku Klux Klan.

The F. B. I. field office in St. Louis, for example, sent the husband of a white woman involved in a black activist group a letter alleging that his wife was having sexual relations with black men.

The letter was signed, "A Soul Sister." In a subsequent report to headquarters, the special agent in charge in St. Louis noted that the couple had separated. "While the letter sent by the St. Louis division was probably not the sole cause of this

separation, it certainly contributed very strongly," the report said.

In another instance, the bureau wrote to a Klan leader's wife, contending that her husband was stealing money and committing adultery. As in the black letter, it was written in local idiom to make it appear it came from another Klan wife.

The committee staff said that these and other harassment techniques constituted the activity of the "contelpro" operations, and that the activity was fairly unsuccessful. Of some 2,300 separate counter-intelligence program operations discovered by the committee, its staff members said, only 23 percent achieved the desired objective.

Thousands Under Scrutiny Mr. Schwarz estimated that hundreds of thousands of Americans came under scrutiny because they were members of groups that had attracted the bureau's interest. He estimated that millions of Americans may have become the subject for some sort of request for intelligence by the F. B. I.

Some of the efforts, he said, appeared totally wasteful. He disclosed documents indicating that the F. B. I. infiltrated the women's liberation movement. In one report, the agent said the group was seeking to "free women from their humdrum existence."

Mr. Smothers traced the intensity of the F. B. I.'s counter-intelligence operations into peaks and valleys over the last half century. Its most recent peak, he said, was between 1970 and late 1971. One sign of this, he said, was the increase in the employment of "ghetto informants," which went from 3,248 in 1968 to 7,500 in 1972. Although the "contelpro" operations were ostensibly halted by the F. B. I. in 1972, the staff men said, there are

indication that some techniques have continued under the euphemism "intensive investigation."

The chairman of the committee, Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, said he felt the staff's findings required that the committee give serious attention to preparing statutes to control future F.B.I. activities.

In a related development, Arthur Murtagh, a retired F.B.I. agent, told the House Intelligence Committee that he had been asked by a bureau superior in 1970 to obtain handwriting samples of several of Dr. King's associates, including Andrew Young, who is now a Democratic Representative from Georgia.

Mr. Murtagh said he was also told to obtain, through an informer in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, copies of the group's letterhead stationery and envelopes.