







David J. Garrow with transcripts of telephone conversations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., The transcript left is from a conversation recorded Mar. 27, 1967.

unist Party, a liaison that Mr. Levison repeatedly denied before his death in 1979 and that Dr. King refused to believe.

The Levison transcripts confirm that even after private warnings to Dr. King by friendly Government officials that his contacts with Mr. Levison were being monitored by the F.B.I. and that charges of a "Communist connection" could be damaging to the civil rights movement, Dr. King consulted Mr. Levison frequently by telephone. For a time Dr. King sought Mr. Levison's counsel through intermediaries, but the telephones of the go-betweens were tapped too.

The files also reveal the huge cost in

manpower and the stunning return in the F.B.I. telephone surveillance. The Levison transcripts show that for more than seven years, round-the-clock teams of bureau personnel recorded and typed up such intelligence as Mr. Levison's consultations with his wife about New York restaurants and movies at which he would meet her after work.

In an interview, Mr. Garrow said he had received 180,000 of transcripts and other documents from the F.B.I. and that requests for 150,000 more were still being processed. The F.B.I.'s surveillance of Mr. Levison, which continued for a year, and a half after Dr. King's death, was authorized by Mr. Kennedy

and was continued by his successors as Attorney General, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Ramsey Clark and John N. Mitchell.

The possibility of an antiwar Presidential candidacy by Dr. King was urged upon him by such peace activists as Dr. Benjamin Spock.

After months of indecision, as revealed in the transcripts, over whether his role as a "moral leader" required him to oppose the war more aggressively, Dr. King finally declared at a news conference in Atlanta on April 25, 1967, that he had no interest in being a candidate.

By then Mr. Johnson had already

been given F.B.I. reports of Dr. King's concession to his advisers, including Mr. Levison, that to preserve the confidence of the political center he would have to avoid linking the civil rights movement with the increasingly strident and radical politics of the anti-war activists.

Dr. King was overheard by the F.B.I. describing his proposed Presidential candidacy as an effort "to punish" Mr. Johnson for his conduct of the Vietnam war by robbing him of black votes.

But according to Harry C. McPherson, a top Johnson aide who is now a Washington lawyer, the equivocal plan for a King-led opposition was never regarded as a threat by Mr. Johnson.

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