

The Wiretap On Dr. King-- New Report

Washington

The main reason Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy authorized taps on Dr. Martin Luther King's telephone in 1963 was to "avoid problems with the FBI" and to satisfy Director J. Edgar Hoover, Atlantic Monthly said in an article published yesterday.

The magazine said these were the conclusions drawn by author Victor Navasky after a six-year study that included interviews with Kennedy and Dr. King, both of whom were assassinated in 1968.

Navasky wrote that Kennedy's authorization was mostly "to avoid problems... not merely the present problems of living with the bureau, having to face non-cooperation on unrelated areas, risking an FBI torpedo of the civil rights bill, inviting harassment from congressmen, columnists and other legions of constituents who respond to Mr. Hoover's distress signals.

"Robert Kennedy's calculations had to project a future where, let us suppose in an improbably hypothetical, it was revealed that Dr. King had indeed been the target of an effective Communist conspiracy. It takes no leap of the imagination to project how Mr. Hoover might have used this fact to embarrass the Kennedy Administration."

But, Navasky wrote, Kennedy had other reasons — he thought telephone taps would prove to the FBI that Dr. King was not being influenced by Communists; that such proof would prevent the issue from being raised against the civil rights bill.

Navasky, a lawyer whose book on Robert Kennedy will be published next year, said the telephone taps had nothing to do with subsequent published reports of extramarital sex activities by Dr. King.

These reports, Navasky said, stemmed not from telephone taps but from electronic "bugs" installed by the FBI or local police without the specific authorization of the attorney general.

United Press