

Plot Against King



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THE FBI's undercover campaign to besmirch the late Dr. Martin Luther King was even more incredible than the recent Senate hearings revealed.

It began, as the testimony showed, with the late J. Edgar Hoover. The cantankerous FBI chief developed a boiling hatred for King during the turbulent 1960s.

Some suspect that Hoover became jealous of King's Nobel peace prize, an honor the old man had coveted for himself.

From close associates of both antagonists, we have now pieced together more of the compelling story.

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EARLY in the 1960s, the FBI began monitoring King's activities. Some of his hotel rooms were bugged. One of the tapes contained a replay of an uproarious party, which he had attended.

The FBI director and his trusted sidekick, Clyde Tolson, conspired together to send this embarrassing tape to King's wife, Coretta.

Upon Hoover's instructions, the tapes were doctored in the FBI lab to bring out King's voice, loud and clear. His orders were, as one aide recalls, to mail the tapes "from a southern state" to Coretta King in Atlanta.

The vindictive Hoover also ordered that a separate message, suggesting suicide, should be mailed

to King himself. The diabolical message suggested that King had only 34 days to take the "one way out." The 34 days coincided with the date he was supposed to receive the Nobel prize in Oslo.

But the FBI had not reckoned with the enormous workload at King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The FBI material, therefore, was buried in the pileup of tapes and mail. King showed up in Oslo, accepted the award and returned home, quite unaware that he had been invited by the FBI to kill himself.

As King's friends recall, it was Coretta who eventually opened the package from Florida. Coretta King played part of the scratchy, garbled tape and then called in her husband. King immediately concluded that both the tape and letter were the doing of the FBI,

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NEXT DAY, he summoned some of his closest associates to his Atlanta offices. Among them were the Reverends Ralph Abernathy, Joseph Lowery and Andrew Young.

As they entered, King sighed: "You'd think the FBI would understand that we're trying to save America." The Nobel laureate showed his colleagues the letter. All agreed it was no mere crank note but a foolish FBI attempt to get King to kill himself. Young recalls that King chuckled grimly over the preposterousness of the scheme.