

NEW YORK AP - TIME magazine says FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover confronted the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1964 with some wiretaps revealing King's alleged extramarital activities, and King later toned down his criticism of the FBI.

An issue of the magazine released Sunday gives Time's version of the 1964 Hoover-King meeting in an article discussing a new book about King by novelist John Williams.

In his book, "The King God Didn't Save," Williams says the FBI started tapping King's telephone and bugging his hotel rooms in 1963.

Time says Williams reports that the surveillance uncovered no subversion but "did turn up an astonishing amount of information about King's extensive and vigorous sexual activities."

Williams quotes one anonymous source as telling him that King used a code. "A very attractive woman was called 'Doctor,'" the informant is quoted as having said. "I forget the other names for women not so attractive."

Time says "most newspapers ignored the rumors and leaks to them of King's extramarital activities, but their existence undermined King's effectiveness just the same."

"The effect, says Williams, was one of slow political assassination; King was spared it only by the bullet of James Earl Ray," Time said.

Ray pleaded guilty to killing King in 1968.

In presenting its version of the Hoover-King meeting, Time said: "Williams has the correct outline of the FBI tape story. What he does not have is precisely what happened at the celebrated meeting between FBI Director Hoover and King in 1964.

"Hoover, Time learned, explained to King just what damaging private detail he had on the tapes and lectured him that his morals should be those befitting a Nobel Prize winner. He also suggested that King should tone down his criticism of the FBI. King took the advice. His decline in black esteem followed, a decline scathingly narrated by Williams."

The magazine says Williams argues in his book that King was the complicitous victim of a "white power" plot to manipulate and ultimately destroy him.

The fact that the FBI had been bugging King was revealed last year by FBI agent Robert Nichols in a courtroom in Houston, Tex., where boxer Cassius Clay was seeking to vacate a sentence for refusal to be inducted into the Army. One of the monitored conversations was between King and Clay.

Nichols testified he had been in charge of the surveillance of King until May, 1965, but that he understood it continued until King's death. Nichols was not allowed by the judge to say why King's phones were tapped, but he said it occurred at a time when King was attacking the FBI for assigning Southern agents, rather than Northerners, to protecting civil rights workers.

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Later, when Carl T. Rowan, a Washington newspaper columnist, said it was Hoover's own idea to tap King's phones, the FBI called such a statement "scurrilous," and said all wiretaps had been approved by the then attorney general, Robert F. Kennedy. President Nixon confirmed that Kennedy had approved the taps, and Hoover was reported as saying the King tap was proposed by Kennedy in 1963.

Former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark disputed the FBI version and said that while he was in office, Hoover repeatedly asked for authorization to tap King's phones, but that all such requests were refused, including one two days before King's assassination.

In an article in McCall's magazine last January, Clark called on the government to say if it was true that tapes from the King wiretaps were played to publishers, senators and others.

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