

THE KING HOLIDAY AND ITS MEANING



SPEECH BY SENATOR JESSE HELMS

FOREWORD BY SAMUEL FRANCIS

FOREWORD

BY SAMUEL FRANCIS

On August 2, 1983, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill creating a legal public holiday in honor of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although there had been little discussion of the bill in the House itself and little awareness among the American public that Congress was even considering such a bill, it was immediately clear that the U.S. Senate would take up the legislation soon after the Labor Day recess. The House had passed the King Holiday Bill by an overwhelming vote of 338-90, with significant bipartisan support (both Reps. Jack Kemp and Newt Gingrich voted for it), and the Reagan administration was indicating that the President would not veto it if it came before him. In these circumstances, most political observers seemed to think that Senate enactment and presidential signature of the bill would take place virtually unopposed; few anticipated that the battle over the King holiday in the next few weeks would be one of the most bitter congressional and public controversies of the decade.

From 1981 to 1986 I worked on the staff of North Carolina Republican Sen. John P. East, a close associate and political ally of the senior senator from North Carolina, Jesse Helms. While the legislation was being considered I wrote a paper entitled "Martin Luther King, Jr.: Political Activities and Associations." It was simply documentation of the affiliations with various individuals and organizations of communist background that King had maintained since the days when he first became a nationally prominent figure. In September, the paper was distributed to several Senate offices for the purpose of informing them of these facts about King, facts in which the national news media showed no interest. It was not originally my intention that the paper be read on the floor of the Senate, but the Helms office itself expressed an interest in using it as a speech, and it was read into the Congressional Record on October 3, 1983. During the ensuing debate over the King holiday, I acted as a consultant to Sen. Helms and his regular staff.

Sen. Helms, like Sen. East and many other conservatives in the Senate and the country, was strongly opposed to establishing a national holiday for King. The country already observed no fewer than nine legal public holidays – New Years Day, "President's Day" as it is officially known or "Washington's Birthday" as an unreconstructed American public continues to insist on calling it, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. With the exceptions of Washington's Birthday and Christmas, not a one of these holidays celebrates a single individual. As Sen. East argued, to establish a special holiday just for King was to "elevate him to the same level as the father of our country and above the many other Americans whose achievements approach Washington's." Whatever King's own accomplishments, few would go so far as to claim that they equaled or exceeded those of many other major statesmen, soldiers, and creative minds of American history.

That argument alone should have provided a compelling reason to reject the King holiday, but for some years a well-organized and powerful lobby had pressured Congress for its enactment, and anyone who questioned the need for the holiday was likely to be accused of "racism" or "insensitivity." Congressional Democrats, always eager to court the black voting bloc that has become their party's principal mainstay, were solidly in favor of it (the major exception being Georgia Democrat Larry McDonald, who led the opposition to the measure in the House and who died before the month was over when a Soviet warplane shot down the civilian airliner on which he and nearly three hundred other civilians were traveling).

Republicans, always timid about accusations of racial insensitivity and eager to court the black vote themselves, were almost as supportive of the proposal as the Democrats. Few lawmakers stopped to consider the deeper cultural and political impact a King holiday would have, and few journalists and opinion-makers encouraged them to consider it. Instead, almost all of them – lawmakers and opinion-makers – devoted their energies to vilifying the only public leader who displayed the courage to question the very premise of the proposal – whether Martin Luther King was himself worthy of the immense and unprecedented honor being placed upon him.

It soon became clear that whatever objections might be raised against the holiday, no one in politics or the media wanted to hear about them and that even the Republican leadership of the Senate was sympathetic to passage of the legislation. When the Senate Majority Leader, Howard Baker, scheduled action to consider the bill soon after Congress returned from the Labor Day recess, King's widow, Coretta Scott King, called Sen. Baker and urged him to postpone action in order to gain time to gather more support for the bill. The senator readily agreed, telling the press, "She felt chances for passage would be enhanced and improved if it were postponed. The postponement of this is not for the purpose of delay." Nevertheless, despite the support for the bill from the Republican leadership itself, the vote was delayed again, mainly because of the efforts of Sen. Helms.

Sen. Helms delivered his speech on King on October 3 and later supplemented it with a document of some 300 pages consisting mainly of declassified FBI and other government reports about King's connections with communists and communist-influenced groups that the speech recounted. That document, distributed on the desks of all senators, was promptly characterized as "a packet of filth" by New York's Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who threw it to the floor of the Senate and stomped on it (he later repeated his stomping off the Senate floor for the benefit of the evening news), while Sen. Edward Kennedy denounced the Helms speech as "Red smear tactics" that should be "shunned by the American people." A few days later, columnist Edwin M. Yoder, Jr. in the Washington Post sneered that Jesse Helms "is a stopped clock if ever American politics had one" who could be depended on to "contaminate a serious argument with debating points from the gutter," while he described King as "a prophet, a man of good works, a thoroughly wholesome influence in American life." Writing in the Washington Times, conservative Aram Bakshian held that Sen. Helms was simply politically motivated: "He has nothing to lose and everything to gain by heaping scorn on the memory of Martin Luther King and thereby titillating the great white trash." Leftist Richard Cohen wrote of Helms in the Post, "His sincerity is not in question. Only his decency."

Meanwhile, Sen. Helms, with legal assistance from the Conservative Caucus, filed suit in federal court to obtain the release of FBI surveillance tapes on King that had been sealed by court order until the year 2027. Their argument was that senators could not fairly evaluate King's character and beliefs and cast an informed vote on the holiday measure until they had gained access to this sealed material and had an opportunity to examine it. The Reagan Justice Department opposed this action, and on October 18, U.S. District Judge John Lewis Smith, Jr. refused to release the King files, which remain sealed to this day.

Efforts to send the bill to committee also failed. Although it is a routine practice for the Senate to refer all legislation to committee, where hearings can consider the merits of the proposed law, this was not done in the case of the King holiday bill. Sen. Kennedy, a former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, argued that hearings on a similar proposal had been held in a previous Congress and there was no need to hold new hearings. He was correct that hearings had been held, but there had been considerable turnover in the Senate since then and copies of those hearings were not generally available. Nevertheless,

it soon became clear that Republicans and Democrats, liberals and many conservatives, the White House, the courts, and the media all wanted the King holiday bill passed as soon as possible, with as little serious discussion of King's character, beliefs, and associations as possible.

Why this was so was becoming increasingly clear to me as an observer of the process. Our office soon began to receive phone calls and letters from all over the country expressing strong popular opposition to the bill. Aides from other Senate offices – I specifically remember one from Washington state and one from Pennsylvania – told me their mail from constituents was running overwhelmingly against the bill, and I recall overhearing Sen. Robert Dole telling a colleague that he had to go back to Kansas and prove he was still a Republican despite his support for the King holiday bill. The political leaders of both parties were beginning to grasp that they were sitting on top of a potential political earthquake, which they wanted to stifle before it swallowed them all.

On October 19, then, the vote was held, 78 in favor of the holiday and 22 against (37 Republicans and 41 Democrats voted for the bill; 18 Republicans and 4 Democrats voted against it); several substitute amendments intended to replace the King holiday measure were defeated without significant debate. President Reagan signed the bill into law on November 2nd. I distinctly remember standing with Sen. Helms in the Republican cloakroom just off the floor of the Senate during the debate, listening to one senator after another approaching him to apologize for the insulting language they had just used about Sen. Helms on the floor. Not a few of the senators assured him they knew he was right about King but what else could they do but denounce Helms and vote for the holiday? Most of them claimed political expediency as their excuse, and I recall one Senate aide chortling that "what old Jesse needs to do is get back to North Carolina and try to save his own neck" from the coming disaster he had prepared for himself in opposing the King holiday.

Indeed, it was conventional wisdom in Washington at that time that Jesse Helms had committed political suicide by his opposition to the King holiday and that he was certain to lose re-election the following year against a challenge by Democratic Governor James B. Hunt. In fact, Sen. Helms was trailing in the polls prior to the controversy over the holiday. The Washington Post carried a story shortly after the vote on the holiday bill with the headline, "Battle to Block King Holiday May Have Hurt Helms at Home," and a former political reporter from North Carolina confidently gloated in the Post on October 23 that Helms was "Destined to Lose in '84."

In the event, of course, Sen. Helms was re-elected by a healthy margin, and the Post itself acknowledged the role of his opposition to the King Holiday as a major factor in his political revival. As Post reporter Bill Peterson wrote in news stories after Helms' re-election on November 6, 1984, his "standing among whites ... shot up in polls after he led a filibuster [strong opposition] against a bill establishing a national holiday on the birthday of the late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.," and on November 18, "A poll before the filibuster showed Helms trailing Hunt by 20 percentage points. By December, Hunt's lead was sliced in half. White voters who had been feeling doubts about Helms began returning to the fold."⁽¹⁾ If Sen. Helms' speech against the King holiday had any enduring effect, then, it was to help re-elect him to the Senate.

So, was Jesse Helms right about Martin Luther King? That King had close connections with individuals and groups that were openly communist is clear today, as it was clear during King's own lifetime and during the debate on the holiday bill. Indeed, only two weeks after the Senate vote, on November 1, 1983, the New York Times published a letter written by Michael Parenti, an associate fellow of the far-left Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and a frequent contributor to Political Affairs, an official organ

of the Communist Party that styles itself the "Theoretical Journal of the Communist Party, U.S.A." The letter demanded "What if communists had links to Dr. King?" Mr. Parenti pointed out that "The three areas in which King was most active — civil rights, peace and the labor struggle (the latter two toward the end of his life) — are also areas in which U.S. Communists have worked long and devotedly," and he criticized "liberals" who "once again accept the McCarthyite premise that U.S. Communists are purveyors of evil and that any association with them taints one forever. Dr. King himself would not have accepted such a premise." Those of Mr. Parenti's persuasion may see nothing scandalous in associations with known communists, but the "liberals" whom he criticized knew better than to make that argument in public.

Since the debate over the holiday in the Senate, additional information has emerged that further supports the argument that Sen. Helms made. Only a few days after Sen. Helms delivered his speech, I came across articles in *Political Affairs* that further implicated King with American Communism. One of the comparatively few Americans to praise King's virulently anti-American speech on the Vietnam war in 1967 was Arnold Johnson, Public Relations Director for the Communist Party and a sponsor of the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. In an article in *Political Affairs*, Johnson wrote that

the peace movement became the central focal point for millions recognizing, as Reverend Martin Luther King pointed out, that it was the United States which had become the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,"

and that "The determination of young people to act in accord with the dictates of their conscience received new encouragement by the declaration of Reverend King..." While liberal opponents of the Vietnam war condemned King's remarks on the United States and the war, this leader of and spokesman for the Communist Party praised the speech and found that it promoted "anti-imperialist consciousness."⁽²⁾ After King's death in 1968, *Political Affairs* published a nine-page editorial obituary of him which held that while King "was not a Marxist," he was nevertheless "progressive," and concluded that "We must not fail to do all in our power to realize the dream for which he died."⁽³⁾ The following month the same Communist Party organ published a five-page comment by one Joseph Felshin who took issue with the editorial's comment that King was not a Marxist and who documented King's sympathies for Marxism and various known communists in a number of speeches.

Even more significant information about the clandestine communist connection with King is contained in a recent study of the FBI counter-intelligence operation known as "Operation SOLO." As the Helms speech discusses, one of the major reasons for FBI surveillance of King was King's close relationship with Stanley D. Levison, who was known to have been a major figure in the Communist Party and an important link with the party's masters in the Soviet Union. When the King holiday was debated in Congress, it was not entirely clear that Levison had remained a communist or at least a communist sympathizer during the time he worked with King, although the indications were that he did remain a communist. In 1996, however, John Barron, a nationally known expert on Soviet espionage, published a full account of Operation SOLO in which Levison's continuing relationship with the Communist Party and communism became clear.

Thus, Barron reports that in November, 1959, James Jackson, the party's secretary in charge of "Negro and Southern Affairs," told Jack Childs (the FBI's informant in SOLO) that both Levison and Hunter Pitts O'Dell, a secret member of the party's governing body, the National Committee, were working with King. Some months later, on May 6, 1960, Childs reported that

Hunter Pitts [Jack] O'Dell is working full time in connection with the King mass meeting to be held in Harlem on May 17, 1960. Working closely with O'Dell are Stanley and Roy Levison The CP considers [the] King meeting of the most importance and feels that it is definitely to the Party's advantage to assign outstanding Party members to work with the [Martin] Luther King group. CP policy at the moment is to concentrate upon Martin Luther King.⁽⁴⁾

The fact that Jackson, a Communist Party official, knew and approved of Levison's relationship with King virtually confirms that Levison was continuing to work for the party. Moreover, despite some disagreement with the party in the mid-1950s, Levison continued a close relationship with at least two important party officials, Lem Harris and O'Dell himself. Barron also points out that Levison remained close to his brother, Roy Levison (also known as "Roy Bennett"), "who remained active in party finances and donated substantial sums to the party well after 1956."⁽⁵⁾

Finally, Barron also points out that Levison, during the time he was working with King, also was a close associate of a Soviet intelligence officer at the United Nations in New York City, KGB officer Victor Lessiovsky, who was well known to U.S. intelligence circles as a specialist in "influence operations" - i.e., in Barron's words, "in inducing influential foreigners to do, wittingly or unwittingly, what the Soviet Union wanted them to do."⁽⁶⁾ There would have been no reason for Levison's continuing relationship with Lessiovsky had Levison really broken with the party, and Lessiovsky himself would have had strong security reasons to avoid such a relationship. The information about Levison's continuing personal and political relationships that Barron provides thus substantiates the view that Levison continued to be a communist or a sympathizer with communism, if not a communist agent, during the time he worked with King and the civil rights movement. Moreover, the strong interest that the Communist Party and a major KGB officer showed in King and Levison during this time suggests that the movement King was leading played an important role in Soviet and communist plans. Indeed, it suggests that the Soviets supported and promoted the civil rights movement under King's leadership as an "influence operation" of the Soviet government.

Of course, to say that King maintained close affiliations with persons whom he knew to be communists is not to say that King himself was ever a communist or that the movement he led was controlled by communists; but his continuing associations with communists, and his repeated dishonesty about those connections, do raise serious questions about his own character, about the nature of his own political views and goals, and about whether we as a nation should have awarded him (and should continue to award him) the honor the holiday confers. Moreover, the embarrassing political connections that were known at the time seem today to be merely the tip of the ethical and political iceberg with which King's reputation continues to collide.

While researching King's background in 1983, I deliberately chose to dwell on his communist affiliations rather than on other issues involving his sexual morality. I did so because at that time the facts about King's subversive connections were well-documented, while the details of his sex life were not. In the course of writing the paper, however, I spoke to several former agents of the FBI who had been personally engaged in the FBI surveillance of King and who knew from first-hand observation that the rumors about his undisciplined sex life were substantially true. A few years later, with the publication in 1989 of Ralph Abernathy's autobiography, *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down*, those rumors were substantiated by one of King's closest friends and political allies. It is quite true that a person's sex life is largely his own business, but in the case of an internationally prominent figure such as King, it becomes publicly relevant,

and it is especially relevant given the high moral stature King's admirers habitually ascribe to him, the issue of his integrity as a Christian clergyman, and the proposal to elevate him to the status of a national moral icon.

In the course of the Senate debate on the King holiday, the East office received a letter from a retired FBI official, Charles D. Brennan. Mr. Brennan, who had served as Assistant Director of the FBI, stated that he had personally been involved in the FBI surveillance of King and knew from first-hand observation the truth about King's sexual conduct – conduct that Mr. Brennan characterized as “orgiastic and adulterous escapades, some of which indicated that King could be bestial in his sexual abuse of women.” He also stated that “King frequently drank to excess and at times exhibited extreme emotional instability as when he once threatened to jump from his hotel room window.” In a study that he prepared, Mr. Brennan described King's “sexual activities and his excessive drinking” that FBI surveillance discovered. It was this kind of conduct, he wrote, that led FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to describe King as “a tom cat with obsessive degenerate sexual urges” and President Lyndon Johnson to call King a “hypocrite preacher.” Mr. Brennan also acknowledged:

It was muck the FBI collected. It was not the FBI's most shining hour. There would be no point in wallowing in it again. The point is that the muck is there. It is there in the form of transcripts, recordings, photos, and logs. It is there in great quantity. There are volumes of material labeled “obscene.” Future historians just will not be able to avoid it.

It is precisely this material that is sealed under court order until the year 2027 and to which the Senate was denied access prior to the vote on the King holiday.

One instance from King's life that perhaps illuminates his character was provided by historian David Garrow in his study of the FBI's surveillance of King. Garrow recounts what the FBI gathered during a 48-hour surveillance of King between February 22 and 24, 1964 in the Hyatt House Motel in Los Angeles.

“In that forty-eight hours the Bureau acquired what in retrospect would be its most prized recordings of Dr. King. The treasured highlight was a long and extremely funny storytelling session during which King (a) bestowed supposedly honorific titles or appointments of an explicitly sexual nature on some of his friends, (b) engaged in an extended dialogue of double-entendre phrases that had sexual as well as religious connotations, and (c) told an explicit joke about the rumored sexual practices of recently assassinated President John F. Kennedy, with reference to both Mrs. Kennedy, and the President's funeral.”⁽⁷⁾

Garrow's characterization of the episode as “extremely funny” is one way of describing the incident; another is that during the session in Los Angeles, King, a Christian minister, made obscene jokes with his own followers (several of them also ministers), made sexual and sacrilegious jokes, and made obscene and insulting remarks intended to be funny about the late President Kennedy and his sex life with Mrs. Kennedy. It should be recalled that these jokes were made by King about a man who had supported his controversial cause, had lost political support because of his support for King and the civil rights movement, and had been dead for less than three months at the time King engaged in obscene humor about him and his wife. In February 1964, the nation was still in a state of shock over Kennedy's death, but King apparently found his death a suitable occasion for dirty jokes.

More recently still, in addition to disclosures about King's bizarre sex life and his close connections with communists, it has come to light that King's record of deliberate deception in his own personal interests

reaches as far back as his years in college and graduate school, when he plagiarized significant portions of his research papers and even his doctoral dissertation, an act that would cause the immediate professional ruin of any academic figure. Evidence of King's plagiarism, which was almost certainly known to his academic sponsors at Boston University and was indisputably known to other academics at the King Papers Project at Stanford University, was deliberately suppressed and denied. It finally came to light in reports published by the Wall Street Journal in 1990 and was later exhaustively documented in articles and a monograph by Theodore Pappas of the Rockford Institute.⁽⁸⁾

Yet, incredibly – even after thorough documentation of King's affiliations with communists, after the revelations about his personal moral flaws, and after proof of his brazen dishonesty in plagiarizing his dissertation and several other published writings – incredibly there is no proposal to rescind the holiday that honors him. Indeed, states like Arizona and New Hampshire that did not rush to adopt their own holidays in honor of King have themselves been vilified and threatened with systematic boycotts. The continuing indulgence of King is in part due to simple political cowardice – fear of being denounced as a “racist” – but also to the political utility of the King holiday for those who seek to advance their own political agenda. Almost immediately upon the enactment of the holiday bill, the King holiday came to serve as a kind of charter for the radical regime of “political correctness” and “multiculturalism” that now prevails at many of the nation's major universities and in many areas of public and private life.

This is so because the argument generally offered for the King holiday by King's own radical collaborators and disciples is considerably different from the argument for it offered by most Republicans and Democrats. The latter argue that they simply want to celebrate what they take to be King's personal courage and commitment to racial tolerance; the holiday, in their view, is simply celebratory and commemorative, and they do not intend that the holiday should advance any other agenda. But this is not the argument in favor of the King holiday that we hear from partisans like Mrs. King and those who harbor similar views. A few days after Senate passage of the holiday measure, Mrs. King wrote in the Washington Post (October 23, 1983) about how the holiday should be observed.

“The holiday,” she wrote, “must be substantive as well as symbolic. It must be more than a day of celebration... Let this holiday be a day of reflection, a day of teaching nonviolent philosophy and strategy, a day of getting involved in nonviolent action for social and economic progress.” She noted that for years the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta “has conducted activities around his birthday in many cities.

The week-long observance has included a series of educational programs, policy seminars or conferences, action-oriented workshops, strategy sessions and planning meetings dealing with a wide variety of current issues, from voter registration to full employment to citizen action for nuclear disarmament.”

A few months later, Robert Weisbrot, a fellow of the DuBois Institute at Harvard, was writing in *The New Republic* (January 30, 1984) that “in all, the nation's first commemoration of King's life invites not only celebration, but also cerebation over his – and the country's – unfinished tasks.” Those “unfinished tasks,” according to Mr. Weisbrot, included “curbing disparities of wealth and opportunity in a society still ridden by caste distinctions,” a task toward the accomplishment of which “the reforms of the early ‘60s” were “only a first step.” Among those contemporary leaders “seeking to extend Martin Luther King's legacy,” Mr. Weisbrot wrote, “by far the most influential and best known is his former aide, Jesse Jackson.”

The exploitation of the King holiday for radical political purposes was even further enhanced by Vincent Harding, "Professor of Religion and Social Transformation at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver," writing in the *New York Times* (January 18, 1988). Professor Harding rejected the notion that the King holiday commemorates merely "a kind, gentle and easily managed religious leader of a friendly crusade for racial integration." Such an understanding would "demean and trivialize Dr. King's meaning." Professor Harding wrote:

The Martin Luther King of 1968 was calling for and leading civil disobedience campaigns against the unjust war in Vietnam. Courageously describing our nation as 'the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today,' he was urging us away from a dependence on military solutions. He was encouraging young men to refuse to serve in the military, challenging them not to support America's anti-Communist crusades, which were really destroying the hopes of poor nonwhite peoples everywhere.

This Martin Luther King was calling for a radical redistribution of wealth and political power in American society as a way to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, jobs, education and hope for all of our country's people.

To those of King's own political views, then, the true meaning of the holiday is that it serves to legitimize the radical social and political agenda that King himself favored and to delegitimize traditional American social and cultural institutions – not simply those that supported racial segregation but also those that support a free market economy, an anti-communist foreign policy, and a constitutional system that restrains the power of the state rather than one that centralizes and expands power for the reconstruction of society and the redistribution of wealth. In this sense, the campaign to enact the legal public holiday in honor of Martin Luther King was a small first step on the long march to revolution, a charter by which that revolution is justified as the true and ultimate meaning of the American identity. In this sense, and also in King's own sense, as he defined it in his speech at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, the Declaration of Independence becomes a "promissory note" by which the state is authorized to pursue social and economic egalitarianism as its mission, and all institutions and values that fail to reflect the dominance of equality – racial, cultural, national, economic, political, and social – must be overcome and discarded.

By placing King – and therefore his own radical ideology of social transformation and reconstruction – into the central pantheon of American history, the King holiday provides a green light by which the revolutionary process of transformation and reconstruction can charge full speed ahead. Moreover, by placing King at the center of the American national pantheon, the holiday also serves to undermine any argument against the revolutionary political agenda that it has come to symbolize. Having promoted or accepted the symbol of the new dogma as a defining – perhaps the defining – icon of the American political order, those who oppose the revolutionary agenda the symbol represents have little ground to resist that agenda.⁽⁹⁾

It is hardly an accident, then, that in the years since the enactment of the holiday and the elevation of King as a national icon, systematic attacks on the Confederacy and its symbolism were initiated, movements to ban the teaching of "Western civilization" came to fruition on major American universities, Thomas Jefferson was denounced as a "racist" and "slaveowner," and George Washington's name was removed from a public school in New Orleans on the grounds that he too owned slaves. In the new nation and the new creed of which the King holiday serves as symbol, all institutions, values,

heroes, and symbols that violate the dogma of equality are dethroned and must be eradicated. Those associated with the South and the Confederacy are merely the most obvious violations of the egalitarian dogma and therefore must be the first to go, but they will by no means be the last.

The political affiliations of Martin Luther King that Sen. Jesse Helms so courageously exposed are thus only pointers to the real danger that the King holiday represents. The logical meaning of the holiday is the ultimate destruction of the American Republic as it has been conceived and defined throughout our history, and until the charter for revolution that it represents is repealed, we can expect only further installations of the destruction and dispossession it promises.



Published by Samuel Francis in 1998. Dr. Francis held a B.A. degree from The Johns Hopkins University and a Ph.D. in history from the University of North Carolina. He was the author of *Power and History: The Political Thought of James Burnham* and *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism*. He was a member of the national Board of Directors of the Council of Conservative Citizens, a nationally syndicated columnist, and Editor-in-Chief of the *Citizens Informer* newspaper. Dr. Francis passed away in 2005. Archives of his columns may be found at vdare.com.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Technically, Helms never tried to filibuster the bill; Peterson means merely his opposition to it.

² Arnold Johnson, "The People March for Peace," *Political Affairs*, XLVI (June, 1967), pp. 3, 7.

³ "Editorial Comment: Martin Luther King: Man of the People," *Political Affairs*, XLVII (May, 1968), pp. 2-11.

⁴ John Barron, *Operation SOLO: The FBI's Man in the Kremlin* (Washington, D.C. Regnery Publishing, 1996), p. 263.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 265-66.

⁷ David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr: From "Solo" to Memphis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), p. 109.

⁸ See Peter Waldman, *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 1990, p. 1, reprinted in Theodore Pappas, ed., *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Plagiarism Story* (Rockford, Illinois; The Rockford Institute, 1994).

⁹ For further discussion of this understanding of the role of the King holiday, see Dr. Francis' essay, "The Cult of Dr. King," in his book, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

Remarks of Senator Jesse Helms

Congressional Record, October 3, 1983
Vol. 129, No. 130, pages S 13452 through S13461

Mr. President, in light of the comments by the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. Kennedy), it is important that there be such an examination of the political activities and associations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., principally from the beginning of his work in the civil rights movement in the mid 1950s until his death in 1968. Throughout this period, but especially toward the beginning and end of his career, King associated with identified members of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), with persons who were former members of or close to the CPUSA, and with CPUSA front organizations. In some important respects King's civil rights activities and later his opposition to the Vietnam war were strongly influenced by and dependent on these associations.

There is no evidence that King himself was a member of the CPUSA or that he was a rigorous adherent of Marxist ideology or of the Communist Party line. Nevertheless, King was repeatedly warned about his associations with known Communists by friendly elements in the Kennedy Administration and the Department of Justice (DOJ) (including strong and explicit warning from President Kennedy himself). King took perfunctory and deceptive measures to separate himself from the Communists against whom he was warned. He continued to have close and secret contacts with at least some of them after being informed and warned of their background, and he violated a commitment to sever his relationships with identified Communists.

Throughout his career King, unlike many other civil rights leaders of his time, associated with the most extreme political elements in the United States. He addressed their organizations, signed their petitions, and invited them into his own organizational activities. Extremist elements played a significant role in promoting and influencing King's opposition to the Vietnam war - an opposition that was not predicated on what King believed to be the best interests of the United States, but on his sympathy for the North Vietnamese Communist regime and on an essentially Marxist and anti-American ideological view of U.S. foreign policy.

King's patterns of associations and activities described in this report show that, at the least, he had no strong objection to Communism, that he appears to have welcomed collaboration with Communists, and that he and his principal vehicle, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), were subject to influence and manipulation by Communists. The conclusion must be that Martin Luther King, Jr. was either an irresponsible individual, careless of his own reputation and that of the civil rights movement for integrity and loyalty, or that he knowingly cooperated and sympathized with subversive and totalitarian elements under the control of a hostile foreign power.

Biographical Data

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. He was the son of Alberta Williams and Martin Luther King, Sr., a Baptist minister. He was graduated from Morehouse College, Atlanta, in 1948, receiving the degree of B.A. He attended the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, receiving the degree of B.D. in 1951, and he received the degree of Ph.D. from Boston

University in 1955. In 1953 he married Coretta Scott of Alabama, by whom he was the father of four children. On April 4, 1968 King was murdered by a rifle assault in Memphis, Tennessee. On March 10, 1969, James Earl Ray, an escaped convict, pled guilty to the murder of King and was sentenced to 99 years in prison, a term he is now serving.

Operation "SOLO" and Stanley D. Levison⁽¹⁾

In the early 1950s the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) undertook a long-term and highly classified counter-intelligence operation, against the CPUSA. The FBI persuaded a former member of the National Committee of the CPUSA and former editor of the *Daily Worker*, the Party newspaper, to become active again within the Party leadership and to report on Party activities to the FBI. This man's name was Morris Childs, and his brother, Jack Childs, also a Communist, agreed to act as an informant as well. The FBI operation was known as SOLO, and for nearly 30 years it provided reliable and highly sensitive information about the CPUSA, its activities within the United States, and its relations with the Soviet Union to the highest authorities in the U.S. government. At least three U.S. Presidents were aware of SOLO, and Morris Childs may have briefed President Nixon prior to his trip to Moscow in 1972. In 1980 SOLO was brought to an end. Jack Childs died on August 12, 1980, and the operation was publicly disclosed and thus terminated by historian David J. Garrow in a book published the following year.

Among the most important facts learned from SOLO was that the CPUSA was dependent on a direct financial subsidy paid by the Soviet Union. About one million dollars a year in Soviet funds was paid to a member of the CPUSA, usually Jack Childs himself, in New York City. Although this subsidy was illegal, the FBI allowed it to continue for a number of reasons - prosecution would have exposed SOLO and necessarily brought it to an end, and the operation was of continuing value; and the dependence of the Party on Soviet funds meant that it did not seek to increase its membership and importance within the United States.

In 1953 Jack Childs reported to the FBI that an individual named Stanley David Levison (1912- 1979), a New York lawyer and businessman, was deeply involved in acquiring and disposing of the funds of the Soviet subsidy to the CPUSA. Levison may have been involved as a financial benefactor to the Party as early as 1945 and may have established legitimate business enterprises in the United States and Latin America in order to launder Soviet funds to the Party. In this connection Levison was said to have worked with Isidore G. Needleman, the representative of the Soviet trading corporation AMTORG.

Childs also reported to the FBI that Levison assisted CPUSA leaders to acquire and manage the Party's secret funds and that he directed about \$50,000 a year into the Party's treasury. After the death of Party treasurer William Weiner in 1954, Levison's financial role became increasingly important, and Levison, according to Childs, became "the interim chief administrator of the party's most secret funds."⁽²⁾

The FBI maintained close surveillance of Levison, but in mid to late 1955, Levison's financial role began to decline. The FBI decreased its surveillance, although Levison was believed to have occasional contacts with CPUSA leaders. The Bureau eventually terminated surveillance of Levison, probably sometime in 1957. Some indications that CPUSA leaders were disgruntled with Levison led the FBI to interview him on February 9 and March 4, 1960. It is not clear what Levison told the FBI at these interviews, but he definitely rejected the request of the FBI that he become an informant within the Communist Party.

In the summer of 1956 Bayard Rustin, himself a former member of the Young Communist League, the youth arm of the CPUSA, introduced Levison to Martin Luther King, Jr. in New York City. Levison and King soon became close friends, and Levison provided important financial, organizational, and public relations services for King and the SCLC. The FBI was not aware of their relationship until very late 1961 or early 1962, and it was the discovery of their relationship that led to the protracted and intensive FBI-DOJ surveillance of King for the remainder of his life. The FBI believed that Levison was still a Communist and that King's relationship with him represented an opportunity for the Communist Party to infiltrate and manipulate King and the civil rights movement.

Of King's dependence on Levison there can be no doubt. A DOJ task force investigating the FBI surveillance of King discussed this dependence in its report of 1977:

The advisor's [Levison's] relationship to King and the SCLC is amply evidenced in the files and the task force concludes that he was a most trusted advisor. The files are replete with instances of his counseling King and his organization on matters pertaining to organization, finances, political strategy and speech writing. Some examples follow:

The advisor organized, in King's name, a fund raising society This organization and the SCLC were in large measure financed by concerts arranged by this person He also lent counsel to King and the SCLC on the tax consequences of charitable gifts.

On political strategy, he suggested King make a public statement calling for the appointment of a black to the Supreme Court This person advised against accepting a movie offer from a movie director and against approaching Attorney General Kennedy on behalf of a labor leader In each instance his advice was accepted.

King's speech before the AFL-CIO National Convention was written by this advisor He also prepared King's May 1962 speech before the United Packing House Workers Convention In 1965 he prepared responses to press questions directed to Dr. King from a Los Angeles radio station regarding the Los Angeles racial riots and from the *New York Times* regarding the Vietnam War.⁽³⁾

After King's death, Coretta Scott King described Levison's role: "Always working in the background, his contribution has been indispensable," and she wrote of an obituary of King written by Levison and Harry Belafonte, "two of his most devoted and trusted friends," as "the one which best describes the meaning of my husband's life and death."⁽⁴⁾ It may be noted that this obituary began with a description of America as "a nation tenaciously racist sick with violence [and] corrosive with alienation." According to Garrow, Levison also assisted King in the writing and publication of *Stride Toward Freedom*, the administration of contributions to SCLC, and the recruitment of employees of SCLC. King offered to pay Levison for all this help, but Levison consistently refused, writing that "the liberation struggle [i.e., the civil rights movement] is the most positive and rewarding area of work anyone could experience."⁽⁵⁾

There seem to have been few if any agents and administrators in the FBI who knew of Levison's background of involvement in handling the secret and illegal Soviet funds of the CPUSA who doubted that Levison remained a Communist or under Party control at the time he was working with King, and some FBI personnel have suggested that Levison may actually have held rank in the Soviet intelligence service. Garrow himself does not seriously question the accuracy of Childs's reports of Levison's earlier role in the Party, but he appears to be skeptical that Levison continued to be a Communist at the time he

worked with King and that he was motivated in this work by any factor other than friendship for King and belief in the civil rights movement.

Garrow's conclusion in this respect is open to question. He is decidedly favorable to King, as opposed to J. Edgar Hoover and other anti-Communists of the time. It is not clear why Garrow came to this conclusion, since he does not appear to have had access to all FBI materials on Levison or derived from SOLO and since he appears to be largely ignorant of the nature of CPUSA activities in racial relations through front groups and surrogates and of the discipline of the Party over its members.

A number of factors support the belief that Levison continued to be a Communist or to act under CPUSA control during his association with King:

(1) There is no evidence that Levison broke with the CPUSA; the termination of his financial activities on behalf of the Party prior to his work with King means nothing as far as his affiliation with or loyalty to the Party or the Communist movement is concerned.

(2) Levison had been involved not as a rank-and-file member but as an operative involved with clandestine and illegal funding of the CPUSA by a hostile foreign power. He had had access to the highest leaders of the Party and to the inmost secrets of the Party. It is not likely that such tasks would be given to one who was not fully trusted by both the CPUSA leadership and by the Soviets themselves. Even if Levison had changed his mind about Communism, his activities would have constituted grounds for blackmail by the Party.

(3) Several years after the apparent end of his financial activities for the CPUSA, Levison rejected an opportunity to act as an FBI informant against the Party. Details of his discussions with the FBI are not available, but apparently they were not friendly.

(4) Levison testified under subpoena at an executive session of the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security on April 30, 1962. This testimony is still classified. His attorney at this time was William Kunstler, who became notorious for his far left activities in the 1960s and 1970s; Kunstler had been recommended to Levison by the latter's friend, Arthur Kinoy, also a far left activist. Although Levison in his opening statement before the Subcommittee denied that he was or ever had been a member of the Communist Party, he refused to answer any questions during this hearing dealing with his relations with the Party or his alleged financial role in it; he pled the Fifth Amendment throughout the hearing.

(5) Levison's known policy and personnel recommendations to King exhibit a leftist orientation. He was instrumental in persuading and influencing King to oppose the Vietnam war and in hiring at least one other individual with known Communist affiliations to work in SCLC.

(6) Prior to his work in a New York-based civil rights group called "In Friendship" in 1955, Levison had never displayed any interest in civil rights activities. The sudden development of his interest in civil rights and his extensive, time-consuming, and costly assistance to King may have been motivated by a spontaneous and enduring dedication to this cause, but there is little reason to think so. His own description of the civil rights movement as a "liberation struggle" suggests a Marxist perspective.

(7) After King was urged by DOJ to disassociate himself from Levison and was subject to surveillance and distrust by the FBI and the Kennedy Administration, there was no effort on Levison's part to try to explain his past or to persuade appropriate authorities (in the FBI, DOJ, or the White House) that he had been innocent of Communist connections or that his relationship with King was not connected to his

Communist affiliation. Had he been able to do so, King and the civil rights movement would have been much more favorably received by the Kennedy Administration and King himself would probably have been spared several years of surveillance and harassment by the FBI. Instead, Levison and King entered into a secret and deceptive relationship by which Levison continued to influence King through an intermediary, himself of far left orientation and background.

In short, Levison consistently behaved in a manner that lent itself to a sinister interpretation, and his behavior lends further credence to the firm belief of FBI agents involved that Levison remained a Communist or under Communist control. That Levison remained under Communist control was and remains a reasonable explanation of his activities in lieu of any evidence to the contrary or any known behavior on his part that would contradict this explanation.

The FBI informed Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy of the close relationship between Levison and King and of Levison's Communist background on January 8, 1962. The Attorney General decided to warn King of Levison's background and to urge him to disassociate himself from Levison in order to spare himself, the civil rights movement, and the Kennedy Administration any future embarrassment. Both Burke Marshall, Assistant Attorney General, acting through Harris Wofford, White House civil rights advisor, and John Seigenthaler, Administrative Assistant to the Attorney General, informed King that persons close to him were Communists or had Communist backgrounds. King expressed skepticism and made no commitment to inquire further or to take any action. Marshall brought the matter to King's attention again in subsequent meetings. On June 22, 1963, King met separately in Washington with Marshall, Robert Kennedy, and President Kennedy. All three men again warned King about the Communist affiliations of Levison and Jack O'Dell, an official of SCLC who had been promoted by Levison and who had been (and may still have been) a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA. President Kennedy, in a private conversation with King in the White House Rose Garden, compared the situation with the Profumo Scandal in Great Britain and specifically stated, with reference to Levison and O'Dell, "They're Communists. You've got to get rid of them."⁽⁶⁾

Even after this conversation, King "made no move to sever ties with either O'Dell or Levison."⁽⁷⁾ It was not until the FBI leaked information to the press about O'Dell and the publication of this information that King "accepted" O'Dell's resignation from SCLC in a letter of July 3, 1963. King had still done nothing to sever ties with Levison, and not until after a meeting of Burke Marshall with Andrew Young of SCLC did a change in their relationship occur. In this meeting Marshall told Young, "I can't give you any proof, but, if you know Colonel Rudolph Abel of the Soviet secret intelligence, then you know Stanley Levison."⁽⁸⁾ This characterization suggests that the FBI may have had other facts about Levison showing a direct link with the Soviet Union.

Levison himself reportedly suggested to King that they curtail their association, and King reluctantly agreed. However, they now entered into a means of communication deliberately designed to deceive the FBI and the Kennedy Administration. Levison and King were to communicate only through an intermediary (or "cut-out" in intelligence parlance) and to avoid direct contact with each other. In this way Levison could continue to influence King. Whether Levison or King instigated this clandestine and deceptive relationship is not clear.

The intermediary between King and Levison, from July, 1963 until 1965, when the overt contact between them was resumed, was Clarence B. Jones, a black lawyer whose "left political views and firm resistance to any symptoms of racial discrimination had placed him in hot water a number of times" while serving in the U.S. Army in the 1950s.⁽⁹⁾

Jack O'Dell continued to maintain an office at SCLC offices in New York City even after his "resignation" of July 3, and King and SCLC issued contradictory explanations of this continuing relationship. King himself made commitments to federal officials that he would sever his ties to Levison and O'Dell, but telephonic surveillance of King, Levison, and Jones showed that he had not done so in regard to either individual. As Burke Marshall stated in an interview in 1970:

"...if you accept the concept of national security, if you accept the concept that there is a Soviet Communist apparatus and it is trying to interfere with things here - which you have to accept - and that that's a national security issue and that taps are justified in that area, I don't know what could be more important than having the kind of Communist that this man was claimed to be by the Bureau directly influencing Dr. King.⁽¹⁰⁾

Hunter Pitts O'Dell

Hunter Pitts O'Dell (also known as "Jack O'Dell" and "J.H. O'Dell"), known to have been extensively involved in CPUSA affairs at a high level of leadership, worked for the SCLC at least as early as 1961. O'Dell met Martin Luther King in 1959 and had communicated with him by mail in 1959 and 1960. In June, 1962, Stanley Levison recommended to King that he hire O'Dell as his executive assistant, and O'Dell subsequently was increasingly active in SCLC and was listed as a "ranking employee of the organization?"⁽¹¹⁾

O'Dell testified under *subpoena* in hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security (SISS) in New Orleans on April 12, 1956; he took the Fifth Amendment when asked about his organizational activities in New Orleans on behalf of the CPUSA. Materials discovered in O'Dell's apartment at the time the *subpoena* was served were described in the Annual Report of the Subcommittee as "Communist literature from Communist parties in various parts of the world."⁽¹²⁾ He also took the Fifth Amendment when asked if he was a member of the CPUSA in a hearing before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) on July 30, 1958. O'Dell, according to an FBI report of 1962, was elected a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA in December, 1959, and, according to information submitted to HCUA in 1961, was a member of the National Committee as of that year.⁽¹³⁾ As Garrow states, "no one, including O'Dell, denied his work with the Communist Party from the late 1940s to at least the late 1950s."⁽¹⁴⁾

O'Dell is an associate editor of *Freedomways*, a magazine described in 1964 by J. Edgar Hoover as an organ which the CPUSA "continues to use as a vehicle of propaganda." One of the editors of *Freedomways* is Esther Jackson, a member of the CPUSA and wife of James Jackson, a leader of the CPUSA. O'Dell, as well as James Jackson, are included in a "List of Members" of the World Peace Council for 1980-1983. The World Peace Council, long known as a Soviet-controlled front organization, was described by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1982 as "the major Soviet-controlled international front organization."⁽¹⁵⁾

In October, 1962, various newspapers in the United States, using information provided them by the FBI, exposed O'Dell's Communist affiliations and his current ties to King and the SCLC. King issued an inaccurate statement that sought to minimize O'Dell's work with the SCLC and accepted O'Dell's resignation. As Garrow states, "The resignation ... was more fiction than fact, as King's own message and appointment books for late 1962 and the first half of 1963 reflect."⁽¹⁶⁾ Further news stories of June, 1963, which exposed O'Dell's continuing relationship with King and his presence in the New York office of SCLC, coupled with warnings from the Kennedy Administration led King again to accept the

resignation of O'Dell on July 3, 1963. Even after this date, however, FBI surveillance showed a continuing relationship between O'Dell and SCLC.

There is no doubt about O'Dell's extensive and high level activities in and for the Communist Party, and his affiliations since 1961 strongly suggest continued adherence to and sympathy for the CPUSA and the Soviet Union to the present day. Despite these ties and King's knowledge of them, King promoted O'Dell within the SCLC at the behest of Levison and retained his help after twice publicly claiming to have disassociated himself from O'Dell following strong and explicit warnings from the Kennedy Administration about O'Dell's Communist background and affiliations.

Southern Conference Educational Fund

Stanley Levison and Hunter Pitts O'Dell were not the only individuals of Communist background with whom Martin Luther King was in contact and from whom he received advice, although they were in a better position than most to exert influence on him. From the mid 1950s through at least the early 1960s, King and the SCLC were closely involved with an organization known as the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), essentially a Communist front organization. SCEF was itself dominated by the Communist Party through the Party members who ran it, and some of these individuals provided assistance to King and exerted influence on him and the SCLC.

A. Background of SCEF

SCEF was originally founded as part of an organization known as the Southern Conference on Human Welfare (SCHW), founded in Birmingham, Alabama, on September 6, 1938. SCHW was originally located in Nashville, Tennessee, but later moved to New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1947, the House Committee on Un-American Activities issued a report on SCHW, which found:

Decisive and key posts [of SCHW] are in most instances controlled by persons whose record is faithful to the line of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union

The Southern Conference for Human Welfare is perhaps the most deviously camouflaged Communist-front organization. When put to the following acid test it reveals its true character:

1. It shows unswerving loyalty to the basic principles of Soviet foreign policy.
2. It has consistently refused to take sharp issue with the activities and policies of either the Communist Party, USA, or the Soviet Union.
3. It has maintained in decisive posts persons who have the confidence of the Communist press.
4. It has displayed consistent anti-American bias and pro-Soviet bias, despite professions, in generalities, of love for America.⁽¹⁷⁾

In 1944 the Special Committee on Un-American Activities (SCUA) of the House of Representatives also cited SCHW as a Communist-front.⁽¹⁸⁾

Soon after its identification as a CPUSA front in 1947, SCHW was dissolved, but the Southern Conference Educational Fund continued. SCEF maintained the same address as SCHW (808 Perdido Street, New

Orleans, Louisiana) and published the same periodical (*The Southern Patriot*). In 1954 the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security (SISS) held hearings in New Orleans on SCEF and found that at least 11 former officials of SCHW were or had been also officials of SCEF. Among these were the President and Executive Director of SCEF, both of whom were identified in testimony taken under oath as having been members of the CPUSA and as having been under the discipline of the CPUSA. Both individuals in their own testimony denied these allegations. The Subcommittee concluded in its report that

an objective study of the entire record compels the conclusion that the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., is operating with substantially the same leadership and purposes as its predecessor organization, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

The subcommittee accordingly recommends that the Attorney General take the necessary steps to present this matter before the Subversive Activities Control Board in order that a determination can be made as to the status of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc.⁽¹⁹⁾

B. Backgrounds of Individual Leaders of SCEF

At least two key associates of Martin Luther King were formally associated with SCEF as well as with the SCLC itself. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King's principal vehicle for civil rights activism, was officially founded in Montgomery, Alabama on August 7-8, 1957. Among the guests at the organizational meeting in Montgomery was Ella J. Baker of New York City, of the "In Friendship" organization.⁽²⁰⁾ Baker was also formally associated with SCEF as of October, 1963, as a "Special Consultant." In 1958 Baker established SCLC headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and was a longstanding friend of Martin Luther King. She later played a key role in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an organization that became notorious in the 1960s for its advocacy and instigation of racial discord and violence. John Lewis, a founder of SNCC, described Ella Baker as "the spiritual mother, I guess you would call her, of S.N.C.C."⁽²¹⁾

Little appears to be known of the "In Friendship" organization of which Ella Baker was the representative at the SCLC organizational meeting in 1957. However, Stanley Levison also was closely involved with this organization in New York. According to Garrow,

Levison ... had first become involved in the southern civil rights struggle as one of the most active sponsors of a New York group named In Friendship. Organized in 1955 and 1956, In Friendship provided financial assistance to southern blacks who had suffered white retaliation because of their political activity. In Friendship had sponsored a large May, 1956, rally at Madison Square Garden to salute such southern activists, and a good percentage of the funds raised went to King's Montgomery Improvement Association.⁽²²⁾

It was Levison who, with Bayard Rustin, sent Ella Baker to Atlanta to oversee the SCLC office in that city, just as he had brought O'Dell into the SCLC office in New York.

Fred L. Shuttlesworth, corresponding secretary of SCLC in 1957, was in 1963 the President and a former Vice-President of SCEF. Shuttlesworth was responsible for the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, through which King and other civil rights activists became involved in civil rights work. Several other individuals affiliated with SCEF as organizational leaders were alleged under oath to have been members of the Communist Party and to have accepted Party discipline or can be

shown to have had ties to known Communist Party front organizations. Internal documents of SCEF reveal that Martin Luther King was in close contact with some of these leaders of SCEF.

(1) Aubrey Williams: President-Emeritus of SCEF in 1963, Williams had been identified as a member of the CPUSA and as having accepted the discipline of the Communist Party in the testimony of two former members of the Party, Paul Crouch and Joseph Butler, before SISS in 1954. Williams denied these allegations.

(2) Dr. James A. Dombrowski: Executive Director of SCEF, Dombrowski had also been identified as a member of the Communist Party and as having accepted Party discipline by witnesses Crouch and Butler before SISS in 1954. Dombrowski denied these allegations.⁽²³⁾

(3) Carl Braden: Field Organizer for SCEF, Braden was identified as a member of the CPUSA in the testimony of Alberta Aheam, an FBI informant in the Party, before SISS on October 28, 1957. Braden later served as Executive Director of SCEF (1966-1970) and, until 1973, Information Director of SCEF. Braden was indicted and convicted of advocacy of criminal sedition in the state of Kentucky in 1954 and was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment; the conviction was reversed by the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Pennsylvania v. Nelson*, 350 U.S. 497 (1956), which struck down state sedition laws. In 1959 Braden was convicted of contempt of Congress for refusing to answer questions before HCUA. Braden served a year in a federal penitentiary for this offense, and his conviction was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Braden's wife, Anne McCarty Braden, was also identified by Alberta Aheam as a member of the Communist Party in testimony before SISS in 1957. Anne Braden also was active within the leadership of SCEF.⁽²⁴⁾

(4) William Howard Melish: "Eastern Representative" of SCEF (in New York City) in 1963, Melish was identified as a member of the Communist Party in testimony before the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) in 1956 in connection with SACB hearings on the National Council of American Soviet Friendship, described by HCUA as "the Communist Party's principal front for all things Russian" and included in the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations pursuant to Executive Order 10450. William Howard Melish is the father of Howard Jeffrey Melish (also known as "Jeff Melish"), a member of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and of the violent "Weatherman faction" of SDS. Jeff Melish was arrested in Chicago during the violent "Days of Rage" rioting organized by the Weatherman faction in 1969; he attended the 9th World Youth Festival in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1968 and traveled to Cuba in 1970.⁽²⁵⁾

(5) Benjamin E. Smith: Formerly counsel to and in 1963 treasurer of SCEF, Smith was a member of the executive board of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), repeatedly cited as a Communist front organization, in 1956 and in 1962 was listed as "Co-Secretary" of the NLG Committee to Assist Southern Lawyers. In the 1950s Smith was active in the legal defense of persons charged with violating the Smith Act, and in at least one instance he was reported to have received funds from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, an organization also identified as a Communist front organization.⁽²⁶⁾

C. Internal Documents of SCEF

On October 4, 1963, state and local police raided the headquarters of SCEF in New Orleans and seized a number of internal documents, memoranda, and letters. Much of this material shows extensive involvement on the part of SCEF and its staff in the activities of other CPUSA front organizations. Several of the documents reveal a close relationship between SCEF and Martin Luther King, Jr. These documents include the following:

(1) An appeal to sign a petition to President Kennedy for executive clemency for Carl Braden, recently convicted of contempt of Congress for his refusal to answer questions before HCUA. Among the signatures on the appeal found in SCEF offices are those of "(The Rev.) Martin Luther King, Jr., Atlanta, Ga." and of two former Presidents of SCEF (Aubrey Williams and Edgar A. Love) and of a future President of SCEF, Fred Shuttlesworth. In addition to King and Shuttlesworth, other officers of the SCLC also signed the appeal: Rev. C.K. Steele, first Vice-President of SCLC, and Rev Ralph Abernathy treasurer, SCLC.⁽²⁷⁾

(2) A memorandum, dated January 18, 1963, from Carl Braden to Howard Melish (both of whom had been identified as members of the Communist Party), "IN RE MARTIN KING." Complaining that "Martin King has a bad habit of arriving late at meetings and sundry affairs such as the one we are planning in NYC on Feb. 8," Braden suggested, as a means to correct King's habit, that

either you or Jim Dombrowski should write him at his home, asking him to come to a dinner with you or Mogulescu or some of the key people The dinner invitation to his home will serve to remind him of the engagement that night and will also pin down whether he will be there.⁽²⁸⁾

The significance of this memorandum is that it shows identified Communists (Braden, Melish, and Dombrowski) planning the influencing and manipulation of King for their own purposes. The assumption of the memorandum is that Melish and Dombrowski at least were close enough to King to invite him to dinner and to expect to be able to exert influence on him.

(3) A photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr., Carl Braden, Anne Braden, and James A. Dombrowski, with the legend on the back of the photograph in the handwriting of Dombrowski, "The 6th Annual Conference of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Birmingham, Alabama, September 25 to 28, 1962."⁽²⁹⁾

(4) A check dated March 7, 1963 for \$167.74, issued by SCEF to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with the notation "N.Y. exp." (New York expenses), and signed by Benjamin E. Smith and James A. Dombrowski, treasurer and executive director of SCEF respectively. *The Southern Patriot* of March, 1963 reported that King "paid high tribute" to SCEF in his remarks at the reception of the New York Friends of SCEF, and the *UE News*, official organ of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, reported on October 21, 1963, that King protested the seizure of the records of SCEF in Louisiana and the arrest of two of its leaders and an attorney during the course of his remarks.⁽³⁰⁾

(5) A letter on the stationery of SCEF apparently from Dombrowski to Dr. Lee Lorch, dated August 2, 1963. Lee Lorch was identified as a member of the Communist Party in testimony under oath by John J. Edmiston, a former member of the Party, in a hearing before HCUA on July 12, 1950. The letter from Dombrowski to Lorch discusses activities supportive of civil rights legislation then being considered in the Congress, and proposes the following:

As part of a massive letter writing campaign, we propose to place a full-page ad in at least one newspaper in each of these 15 states.

We enclose a layout and text for the ad to be signed by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Dr. Martin Luther King, president; the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and SCEF.

SCEF will raise the money. It will take about \$10,000 to place the ad in one newspaper in each of the 15 states, \$20,000 in two papers per state, etc.⁽³¹⁾

(6) A memorandum from Dombrowski to members of the executive committee of SCEF, dated June 20, 1962, "RE: ATLANTA CONFERENCE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. The memorandum states in part:

For almost a year the staff has been discussing with various leaders in Atlanta the possibility of a Southwide conference in that city on civil rights and civil liberties. There has been a most encouraging response. Most gratifying is the interest shown by a number of organizations which in the past have not publicly associated themselves with projects in which the SCEF was involved.

... the Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker of SCEF has promised his cooperation, including the personal participation of the SCLC president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.⁽³²⁾

(7) A letter, dated July 27, 1963, from Carl Braden to James Dombrowski, which states in part:

The pressure that has been put on Martin [Luther King, Jr.] about [Hunter Pitts] O'Dell helps to explain why he has been ducking us. I suspected there was something of this sort in the wind.

The UPI has carried a story quoting Martin as saying they have dumped O'Dell for the second time because of fear that the segregationists [sic] would use it against them. He expressed no distaste for Communists or their beliefs, merely puts it on the pragmatic basis that SCLC can't handle the charges of Communism. This is a quite interesting development.

So I think it is best to let Martin and SCLC alone until they feel like coming around to us. They'll be back when the Kennedys and other assorted other [deleted] opportunists with whom they are now consorting have wrung all usefulness out of them - or rather when they have become a liability rather than an asset. Right now the Red-baiters in New York are holding Martin and SCLC as prisoners through offers of large sums of money. We shall see if they get the money and, if they do, how much of a yoke it puts upon them.⁽³³⁾

It will be recalled that in the summer of 1963, President Kennedy had urged King to sever relations with O'Dell and that King had appeared to do so by accepting O'Dell's resignation from SCLC. FBI surveillance showed, however, that O'Dell continued to frequent the New York office of SCLC.

The documents cited above show clearly (a) that individuals in the leadership of SCEF, identified in testimony under oath as members of the Communist Party or generally well known for their activities on behalf of Communism, considered themselves to be on close terms with Martin Luther King and in a position to exert influence on him, and (b) that King himself had no objection to working with identified Communists except on the "pragmatic basis" that Communist affiliation might lend his activities a negative public image and be counter-productive. Indeed, King appears to have worked closely with individuals generally identified as Communists.

King's Activities on Behalf of Other Communist or Communist Front Groups:

In addition to his association and cooperation with SCEF and its leaders, Martin Luther King also associated and cooperated with a number of groups known to be CPUSA front organizations or to be heavily penetrated and influenced by members of the Communist Party. On October 4, 1967, Congressman John M. Ashbrook of Ohio, at that time the ranking minority member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and an authoritative spokesman on internal security matters, inserted in the *Congressional Record* extensive documentation of King's activities in this regard.⁽³⁴⁾

(1) Martin Luther King, Jr. was listed as a sponsor of the National Appeal for Freedom, held in Washington, D.C., November 19-21, 1960, of the Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell, a group identified as a Communist front organization by HCUA and SISS in 1956.

(2) King sent a congratulatory telegram to the 27th annual convention of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) in 1962. UE was expelled from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) in 1949 on grounds that it was dominated by Communists, and in 1944 the SCUA, in a report on the C.I.O. Political Action Committee, found that

the 600,000 members of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (employed in many of the most vital American defense industries) are submitting to an entrenched Communist leadership...⁽³⁵⁾

(3) In May, 1962, King addressed the convention of the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA). Stanley Levison wrote this speech. Charles Hayes of Chicago of UPWA was a guest at the founding meeting of the SCLC in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1957 (with Ella J. Baker of "In Friendship"). The Annual Report of HCUA for 1959 states that Charles A. Hayes of Chicago had been identified as a member of the Communist Party by two witnesses: by John Hackney, a former member of the Communist Party who had served as a Communist in several Party units within the meat-packing industry, and by Carl Nelson, "who stated that he had attended many Communist Party meetings with Mr. Hayes."⁽³⁶⁾ In 1952, in testimony before HCUA, witness Roy Thompson, a former member of the Communist Party and a former official of UPWA in Chicago, stated that he had attended Communist training meetings in which instructions in Communism were given by "a Mr. Charley Hayes."⁽³⁷⁾ In 1959, witness Carl Nelson, a former Communist and worker in the meatpacking industry, testified before HCUA that "the Communist Party deliberately sought to infiltrate its members into the meatpacking industry" because "they would be in an excellent position to cut off food for the Armed Forces" in the event of war.⁽³⁸⁾ Mr. Nelson also identified as having been Communists the editor of the official organ of the UPWA, two field representatives of the union, a departmental director of the union, a district secretary-treasurer of the union, a secretary in the international office of the union, and a former president of a local of the UPWA, in addition to Mr. Hayes, who was a district director of the UPWA, and his secretary.⁽³⁹⁾

(4) Martin Luther King was a luncheon speaker at a conference in Atlanta, Georgia, of the National Lawyers Guild Committee to Assist Southern Lawyers, held on November 30 and December 1, 1962. The National Lawyers Guild was cited several times as a Communist front, and in 1962 the Committee stationery listed Benjamin E. Smith, co-secretary of the Committee and treasurer of SCEF, and Arthur Kinoy as affiliated with it. Kinoy is reported by Garrow to have been a friend of Stanley Levison and to have recommended William Kunstler as an attorney to Levison for the latter's appearance before SISS in April, 1962.⁽⁴⁰⁾

(5) King also lent his support to the National Committee to Abolish the Committee on Un-American Activities, identified as a Communist Party front by HCUA in 1961. Seven of the thirteen founders of this organization were identified as having been members of the CPUSA, including William Howard Melish. Carl Braden was also active in the Committee, as was Anne Braden.⁽⁴¹⁾

(6) King also assisted in the initiation of appeals for executive clemency for Carl Braden and, in 1962, for Junius Scales, former chairman of the North Carolina-South Carolina district of the Communist Party and sentenced to a six-year prison term for violation of the Smith Act.⁽⁴²⁾

(7) Highlander Folk School: One of the most controversial aspects of King's Career concerns his association with the Highlander Folk School of Monteagle, Tennessee, and the nature of the school. In the 1960s groups in opposition to King frequently publicized a photograph showing King at the school, which was described as a "Communist training school," sitting in the company of persons alleged to be Communists or pro-Communists.

This photograph is an authentic one, taken on September 2, 1957, when King addressed the 25th anniversary celebration of the Highlander Folk School. Shown in the photograph sitting adjacent to King are Abner Berry, a correspondent for the communist Party newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, Aubrey Williams, identified as a member of the CPUSA and President of SCEF; and Myles Horton, a founder and director of the Highlander Folk School. Although Myles Horton was not identified as a member of the Communist Party, a witness before SISS in 1954 and a former member for seventeen years and a former official and organizer for the Party, Paul Crouch, testified that he had solicited Horton to join the Party:

At that meeting after we discussed the [Highlander Folk] school I asked Mr. Horton to become a formal member of the Communist Party and his reply was, as near as I can recall his words, "I'm doing you just as much good now as I would if I were a member of the Communist Party. I am often asked if I am a Communist Party member and I always say no. I feel much safer in having no fear that evidence might be uncovered to link me with the Communist Party, and therefore I prefer not to become a member of the Communist Party."⁽⁴³⁾

Crouch also testified that Horton had been affiliated with the Southern Conference Educational Fund and with its predecessor organization, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The Highlander Folk School (HFS) was founded in 1932 by Myles Horton and became well known for its involvement in a number of leftist causes. Both Aubrey Williams and James Dombrowski, each of whom was identified as a member of the Communist Party, were affiliated with HFS. Paul Crouch, who had been district organizer for the state of Tennessee for the Communist Party, described in his testimony the uses of the HFS for the Party as they were developed in a conference that included himself, Horton, and Dombrowski:

The purpose of the conference was to work out a plan by which the *Daily Worker* would be purchased by the school. They would be made accessible to the students, that everywhere possible the instructors should refer to the *Daily Worker*, to news that had come in it, to encourage the students to read it, and it was agreed that the Communist Party should have a student, a leader, sent there as a student whose job it would be to look around for prospective recruits and Mildred White, now in Washington, D.C. was

selected to attend the Highlander Folk School for the purpose of recruiting for the Communist Party and carrying the Communist Party line among the student body there.

MR. ARENS [Special Counsel to the Subcommittee]: You said it was agreed? Who agreed?

MR. CROUCH: Mr. Horton and Mr. Dombrowski.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Based on this information and considerable evidence of a similar nature collected by the Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities of the state of Louisiana in 1963 and by other investigative bodies, it is not inaccurate to describe the Highlander Folk School as a Communist, or at least a pro-Communist, training school.

Although Martin Luther King, Jr. was present only briefly at HFS on September 2, 1957, when the photograph was taken, his relations with HFS appear to have been prolonged and positive. On February 23, 1961, the *New York Times* reported that

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference ... and the Highlander Folk School have joined forces to train Negro leaders for the civil rights struggle.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In 1962 the Highlander Center opened in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Myles Horton on the board of directors. In December, 1962, Martin Luther King, Jr., was listed as a sponsor of the Highlander Center on its letterhead.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Martin Luther King and the Vietnam War

As the Vietnam war escalated in the mid 1960s, Martin Luther King became one of the most outspoken critics of U.S. policy and involvement in Vietnam. It is probable that Stanley Levison in particular encouraged King's criticism, since Levison himself was also critical of the war and wrote President Johnson to urge American withdrawal from Vietnam, describing American policy in Vietnam as "completely irrational, illegal and immoral" and as supportive of "a succession of undemocratic regimes which are opposed by a majority of the people of South Vietnam."⁽⁴⁸⁾ FBI surveillance of King showed that Levison "was urging King to speak out publicly against American military involvement in Vietnam."⁽⁴⁹⁾

On December 28-30, 1966, a conference was held at the University of Chicago to discuss and make plans for a nationwide student strike against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war. This conference, which led to a week of demonstrations against the war known as "Vietnam Week," April 8-15, 1967, was initiated by Bettina Aptheker, daughter of Communist Party theoretician and member of the National Committee of the CPUSA Herbert Aptheker, and herself a member of the CPUSA. The Chicago conference, as a report of the HCUA found, "was instigated and dominated by the Communist Party, U.S.A. and W.E.B. Dubois Clubs of America," described by Attorney General Katzenbach in 1966 as "substantially directed, dominated and controlled by the Communist Party."⁽⁵⁰⁾

The scheduled after-dinner speaker at the Chicago conference was Rev. James L. Bevel, of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who had been released from his duties with SCLC by Martin Luther King in order to serve as national director of the Spring Mobilization Committee To End the War in Vietnam, an organization found by the HCUA to be heavily influenced, supported, and penetrated by Communists and in which "Communists are playing a dominant role." Bevel joined the DuBois Clubs

as a co-plaintiff in a suit to prevent the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) from holding hearings on the DuBois Clubs as petitioned by Attorney General Katzenbach, and Bevel was a sponsor of Vietnam Week and of the Chicago conference that initiated it.⁽⁵¹⁾ The report of the HCUA concluded that the proposal for a nationwide student strike was completely Communist in origin....

Communists are playing dominant roles in both the Student Mobilization Committee and the Spring Mobilization Committee. Further, these two organizations have unified their efforts and are cooperating completely in their purpose of staging on April 15 [1967] the largest demonstrations against the war in Vietnam ever to take place in this country....Dr. Martin Luther King's agreement to play a leading role in the April 15 demonstrations in New York city, and his freeing Rev. James Bevel from his key position in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to head up the Spring Mobilization Committee, are evidence that the Communists have succeeded, at least partially, in implementing their strategy of fusing the Vietnam and civil rights issues in order to strengthen their chances of bringing about a reversal of U.S. policy in Vietnam.⁽⁵²⁾

The major statement of Martin Luther King on the Vietnam war is contained in a speech he delivered at the Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, a few days prior to the beginning of "Vietnam Week." Analysis of this speech shows that King's criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam was not based on a consideration of American national interests and security nor on a belief in pacifism and non-violence, but on an ideological view of the Vietnam conflict that is indistinguishable from the Marxist and New Left perspective.⁽⁵³⁾

King portrayed U.S. troops in Vietnam as foreign conquerors and oppressors, and he specifically compared the United States to Nazi Germany:

They [the South Vietnamese people] move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met.... They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops.... So far we may have killed a million of them - mostly children. What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe?

King described the U.S. government as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" and President Ngo Dinh Diem as "one of the most vicious modern dictators," but he spoke of Ho Chi Minh, the Communist dictator of North Vietnam, as a national leader and the innocent victim of American aggression:

Perhaps only his [Ho Chi Minh's] sense of humor and of irony can save him when he hears the most powerful nation of the world speaking of aggression as it drops thousands of bombs on a poor weak nation more than 8,000 miles away from its shores.

The Communists, in King's view, were the true victims in Vietnam:

In Hanoi are the men who led the nation to independence against the Japanese and the French.... After 1954 they watched us conspire with Diem to prevent elections which would surely have brought Ho Chi Minh to power over a united Vietnam, and they realized they had been betrayed again.

In King's view, the National Liberation Front (NLF), the political arm of the Viet Cong terrorists controlled by North Vietnam, was "that strangely anonymous group we call VC or Communists," which consisted of a membership that "is less than 25 per cent communist."

King might have been interested to learn of the television interview given in France on February 16, 1983 by North Vietnamese generals Vo Nguyen Giap and Vo Bam. As reported by *The Economist* (London) in its issue of 26 February, 1983:

General Bam admitted the decision to unleash an armed revolt against the Saigon government was taken by a North Vietnamese communist party plenum in 1959. This was a year before the National Liberation Front was set up in South Vietnam. The aim, General Bam added, was 'to reunite the country.' So much for that myth that the Vietcong was an autonomous southern force which spontaneously decided to rise against the oppression of the Diem regime. And General Bam should know. As a result of the decision, he was given the job of opening an infiltration trail in the south. The year was still 1959. That was two years before President Kennedy stepped up American support for Diem by sending 685 advisors to South Vietnam. So much for the story that the Ho Chi Minh trail was established only to counteract the American military build-up.... General Bam got his orders on May 19, 1959. "Absolute secrecy, absolute secrecy were our watchwords," he recalled.⁽⁵⁴⁾

King included himself as one of those who

deem ourselves bound by allegiances and loyalties which are broader and deeper than nationalism and which go beyond our nation's self-defined goals and positions. We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document from human hands can make these humans any less our brothers.

Apart from the arrogance and ingratitude displayed by these remarks, it is a logical implication of this self-proclaimed universal humanism that King should have denounced Communist atrocities and tyranny at least as strongly as those he attributed to his own country. Yet throughout King's speech there is not a single word of criticism, let alone of condemnation, for North Vietnam or for Ho Chi Minh, for Ho's internal and external policies by which a totalitarian state was created and its institutions were imposed on adjacent states, for the use of terrorism by the Viet Cong or for the terrorism and systematic repression perpetrated by the Communists in North Vietnam.

King portrayed American policy in Vietnam and U.S. foreign policy in general as motivated by a need to maintain social stability for our investments: and formulated by men who refuse "to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment." He saw "individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries."

King, in other words, did not dissent from U.S. policy in Vietnam because he was concerned for the best interests of the United States or because of moral and humanitarian beliefs. His opposition to the war was drawn from an ideological (and false) view of American foreign policy as motivated by capitalist and imperialist forces that sought only their own material satisfaction and which were responsible for "the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism."

This view of American foreign policy is fundamentally Marxist, and it parallels the theory of Lenin in his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. It was a doctrine that became increasingly fashionable in New Left circles of the late 1960s and 1970s, although it has been subjected to devastating scholarly criticism.

Public reaction to King's speech on Vietnam was largely negative. The *Washington Post*, in an editorial of April 6, 1967, said that the speech "was filled with bitter and damaging allegations and inferences that he did not and could not document."

He has no doubts that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam and thinks it will become clear that our "minimal expectation is to occupy it as an American colony." It is one thing to reproach a government for what it has done and said; it is quite another to attribute to it policies it has never avowed and purposes it has never entertained and then to rebuke it for these sheer inventions of unsupported fantasy.

Life magazine, in its issue of April 21, 1967, described King's speech as "a demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi." Carl Rowan wrote that King "has alienated many of the Negro's friends and armed the Negro's foes by creating the impression that the Negro is disloyal."⁽⁵⁵⁾ John P. Roche, a former director of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), in a memorandum to President Johnson, wrote that King's speech "indicates that King - in desperate search of a constituency - has thrown in with the commies."⁽⁵⁶⁾

Conclusion: Was Martin Luther King a Communist?

As stated earlier in this report, there is no evidence that Martin Luther King was a member of the Communist Party, but the pattern of his activities and associations in the 1950s and 1960s show clearly that he had no strong objection to working with and even relying on Communists or persons and groups whose relationships with the Communist Party were, at the least, ambiguous. It should be recalled that in this period of time (far more than today) many liberal and even radical groups on the left shared a strong awareness of and antipathy for the anti-democratic and brutal nature of Communism and its characteristically deceptive and subversive tactics. It is doubtful that many American liberals would have associated or worked with many the persons and groups with whom King not only was close but on whom he was in several respects dependent. These associations and, even more, King's refusal to break with them, even at the expense of public criticism and the alienation of the Kennedy Administration, strongly suggest that King harbored a strong sympathy for the Communist Party and its goals.

This conclusion is reinforced by King's own political comments and views - not only by the speech on Vietnam discussed above but also by a series of other remarks made toward the end of his life. King apparently harbored sympathy for Marxism, at least in its economic doctrines, from the time of his education in divinity school. The Rev. J. Pius Barbour, described by Garrow as "perhaps King's closest friend" while at Crozer Theological Seminary from 1948 to 1951, believed that King was "economically a Marxist.... He thought the capitalistic system was predicated on exploitation and prejudice, poverty, and that we wouldn't solve these problems until we got a new social order."⁽⁵⁷⁾ King was critical of capitalism in sermons of 1956 and 1957, and in 1967 he told the staff of the SCLC, "We must recognize that we can't solve our problems now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power."⁽⁵⁸⁾ In 1968 he told an interviewer that

America is deeply racist and its democracy is flawed both economically and socially.... the black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws - racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced.⁽⁵⁹⁾

In 1967, in his remarks to the SCLC staff, he argued that

For the last twelve years we have been in a reform movement.... But after Selma and the voting rights bill we moved into a new era, which must be an era of revolution. I think we must see the great distinction here between a reform movement and a revolutionary movement [which would] raise certain basic questions about the whole society.... this means a revolution of values and of other things.⁽⁶⁰⁾

In 1968 he publicly stated, "We are engaged in the class struggle."⁽⁶¹⁾

King's view of American society was thus not fundamentally differently from that of the CPUSA or of other Marxists. While he is generally remembered today as the pioneer for civil rights for blacks and as the architect of non-violent techniques of dissent and political agitation, his hostility to and hatred for America should be made clear. While there is no evidence that King was a member of the Communist Party, his associations with persons close to the Party, his cooperation with and assistance for groups controlled or influenced by the Party, his efforts to disguise these relationships from public view and from his political allies in the Kennedy Administration, and his views of American society and foreign policy all suggest that King may have had an explicit but clandestine relationship with the Communist Party or its agents to promote through his own stature, not the civil rights of blacks or social justice and progress, but the totalitarian goals and ideology of Communism. While there is no evidence to demonstrate this speculation, it is not improbable that such a relationship existed. In any case, given the activities and associations of Martin Luther King described in this report, there is no reason to disagree with the characterization of King made by Congressman John M. Ashbrook on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 4, 1967:

"King has consistently worked with Communists and has helped give them a respectability they do not deserve" and "I believe he has done more for the Communist Party than any other person of this decade."⁽⁶²⁾

~

ADDENDUM

On January 31, 1977, in the cases of *Bernard S. Lee v. Clarence M. Kelley, et al.* (U.S.D.C., D.C.) and *Southern Christian Leadership Conference v. Clarence M. Kelley, et al.* (U.S.D.C., D.C.), United States District Judge John Lewis Smith, Jr. ordered that the Federal Bureau of Investigation purge its files of:

all known copies of the recorded tapes, and transcripts thereof, resulting from the FBI's microphonic surveillance, between 1963 and 1968, of the plaintiff's former president, Martin Luther King, Jr.;

and all known copies of the tapes, transcripts and logs resulting from the FBI's telephone wiretapping, between 1963 and 1968, of the plaintiffs' offices in Atlanta, Georgia and New York, New York, the home of Martin Luther King, Jr., and places of accommodation occupied by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Judge Smith also ordered that

at the expiration of the said ninety (90) day period, the Federal Bureau of Investigation shall deliver to this Court under seal an inventory of said tapes and documents and shall deliver said tapes and documents to the custody of the National Archives and Records Service, to be maintained by the Archivist of the United States under seal for a period of fifty (50) years; and it is further ORDERED that the Archivist of the United States shall take such actions as are necessary to the preservation of said tapes and documents but shall not disclose the tapes or documents, or their contents, except pursuant to a specific Order from a court of competent jurisdiction requiring disclosure.

This material was delivered to the custody of the National Archives and Record Service to be maintained by the Archivist of the United States under a seal for a period of fifty years.

~

FOOTNOTES

¹ Most of this section is drawn from David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), esp. pp. 21-78.

² *Ibid.*, p. 41

³ United States, Department of Justice, *Report of the Task Force to Review the FBI Martin Luther King, Jr., Security and Assassination Investigations*, January 11, 1977, pp. 121-22.

⁴ Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 162-63.

⁵ Quoted in Garrow, *FBI*, p. 28.

⁶ Quoted in Garrow, *FBI*, p. 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, quoted. p. 95.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹² United States, Congress, Senate, *Report of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws*, Committee on the Judiciary, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, for the Year 1956, Section III, December 31, 1956, p. 46. (Publications of this Subcommittee hereinafter cited as SISS).

¹³ United States, Congress, House of Representatives, *Structure and organization of the Communist Party of the United States, Part 1*, Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities, 87th Congress, 1st Session, November 20, 21, and 22, 1961, Testimony of Francis J. McNamara, p. 576. (Publications of this Committee hereinafter cited as HCUA).

¹⁴ Garrow, *FBI*, p. 50.

¹⁵ *World Peace Council, List of Members, 1980-1983* (Helsinki, Finland: Information Centre of the World Peace Council), pp. 141-42; for O'Dell's background, see *Review of the News*, July 13, 1983, pp. 49-50; *Soviet Active Measures*, Hearings before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, 97th Congress, 2nd Session, July 13, 14, 1982, p. 57.

¹⁶ Garrow, *FBI*, p. 50.

¹⁷ HCUA, *Report on Southern Conferences on Human Welfare*, 80th Congress, 1st Session, June 16, 1947, pp. 2 and 17.

¹⁸ HCUA, *Guide to Subversive Organizations and Publications (and Appendixes) Revised and published December 1, 1961 to supersede Guide published on January 2, 1957*, p. 154. (Hereinafter cited as *Guide*).

¹⁹ SISS, *Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., Hearings*, March 18, 19, and 20, 1954, p. VIII.

- ²⁰ Trezz Anderson, "New Rights Group Launched in Dixie," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1957, p. 2, this article misprints "In Friendship" as "In Fellowship."
- ²¹ Robert H. Brisbane, *Black Activism: Racial Revolution in the United States, 1954-1970* (Valley Forge, Pa: Judson Press, 1974), p. 49; see also the masthead of *The Southern Patriot* of October 1963, reproduced in State of Louisiana, The Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities, Report No. 4, November 19, 1963, "Activities of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. in Louisiana," Part I, p. 74, Exhibit 29 (hereinafter cited as JLCUA).
- ²² Garrow, *FBI*, p. 26.
- ²³ SISS, *Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. Hearings*, pp. VI and VII.
- ²⁴ SISS, *Communism in the Mid-South, Hearings*, October 28 and 29, 1957, Testimony of Alberta Ahearn, p. 37; John M. Ashbrook, "Rev. Martin Luther King: Man of Peace or Apostle of Violence," *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, p. H13013.
- ²⁵ JLCUA, p. 14; Guide, pp. 117-18; United States, Congress, House of Representatives, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, *Report on the C.I.O. Political Action Committee*, 78th Congress, 2nd Session, March 29, 1944, p. 156; United States, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Foreign Influence – Weather Underground Organization (WUO)*, August 20, 1976, p. 332.
- ²⁶ See *Guide*, p. 1212, for citations of the National Lawyers Guild as a Communist front, JLCUA, pp. 14-16.
- ²⁷ JLCUA, p. 86, Exhibit 37.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97, Exhibit 41.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100, Exhibit 43a.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101; Exhibits 44 and 44a; Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, p. H13012.
- ³¹ JLCUA, p. 102, Exhibit 45; for the identification of Lee Lorch as a member of the Communist Party, see HCUA, "Hearings Regarding Communist Activities in the Cincinnati, Ohio, Area – Part 1," 81st Congress, 2nd Session, July 12, 13, 14, and 15; August 8, 1950, p. 2675.
- ³² JLCUA, p.104, Exhibit 46.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 106, Exhibits 47 and 47a.
- ³⁴ Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, pp. H13005-H13017 *passim*.
- ³⁵ *Report on the C.I.O. Political Action Committee*, p. 183.
- ³⁶ For Haye's presence at the SCLC meeting in Montgomery, see Trezz Anderson, *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1957, p. 2, where Haye's name is given as "Chris Hayes, United Packing-House Workers ... of Chicago," And see HCUA, *Annual Report*, 1959, p. 40.
- ³⁷ HCUA, "Communist Activities in the Chicago Area – Part 2 (Local 347, United Packinghouse Workers of America, C.I.O.)," Hearings, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, September 4 and 5, 1952, Testimony of Roy Thompson, p. 3767.
- ³⁸ HCUA, *Annual Report*, 1959, pp. 37-38.

- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
- ⁴⁰ Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, p. H13010; JLCUA, p. 75, Exhibit 30.
- ⁴¹ Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, pp. H13011-H13013.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. H13010-13011.
- ⁴³ SISS, *Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., Hearings*, Testimony of Paul Crouch, p. 136; see also Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, pp. H13000-H13012; and JLCUA, pp.23-37.
- ⁴⁴ SISS, *Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., Hearings*, Testimony of Paul Crouch, p. 137.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.135-36.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted, Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, p. H13011.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. H13012.
- ⁴⁸ Garrow, *FBI*, pp. 137-38.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- ⁵⁰ HCUA, *Communist Origins and Manipulation of Vietnam Week (April 8-15, 1967), Report*, March 31, 1967, pp. 53 and 5.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 53, 33-37.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- ⁵³ The text of King's speech, "Beyond Vietnam," was inserted by Congressman Don Edwards, "Dr. Martin Luther King on Vietnam," *Congressional Record*, May 2, 1967, pp. 11402-11406; all quotations given below are from this text.
- ⁵⁴ "Vietnam: We Lied To You," *The Economist* (London), 26 February 1983, pp. 56-57.
- ⁵⁵ Carl T. Rowan, "Martin Luther King's Tragic Decision," *Reader's Digest* (September, 1967), p. 42; for further negative reactions, see Garrow, *FBI*, pp. 180-81.
- ⁵⁶ Quoted in Garrow, *FBI*, p. 180.
- ⁵⁷ Garrow, *FBI*, p. 304, n. 25.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² Ashbrook, *Congressional Record*, October 4, 1967, p. H13005.

This booklet is available, free of charge, at:

RickTylerForCongress.Com

TylerForCongress@gmail.com

Phone: (423) 713-6480