

### III. FBI's Record of Injustice

# The FBI's 'Russia-gating' of Martin Luther King: A Tale for Our Time

by David Shavin

*This article is a slightly edited version of one composed in April 2018 for a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King. While ex-FBI Director James Comey's "Russia-gate" operation has been publicly discredited, unfortunately "Russia-gating" and/or "Putin dupe" operations have reappeared once again center stage in Washington, DC, this time in the guise of "China-gating," particularly with the revival of Pompeo's "Wuhan Lab leak" task force.*

More than fifty years ago, on Thursday, April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated. On Tuesday, April 9, 1968, his mortal remains were interred.

Dr. King loved to pose the Leibnizian concept, that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. Fifty years later, it might be an appropriate time to provide Dr. King some justice; and it might well be that the corner that today's "Russia-gaters" have painted themselves into, provides the universe with the circumstances to end J. Edgar Hoover's legacy.

#### The Immortal Talent of Dr. King

The United States, and the world, has suffered greatly from the events of that week, fifty years ago. What has been missing in our quality of leadership over the past fifty years? Lyndon LaRouche identified in Martin Luther King a true grasp of the Constitutional principle of the "general welfare," as the key for competent leadership:



*The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Charles Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, where he delivered his "Mountain Top" speech.*

If you want to be a true politician, you must be committed to the general welfare. You must be committed to mankind. And to be committed to mankind, is to look at the person who's in the *worst* condition, in general—and uplift them! Then, you really have proven, that you care about the general welfare. If you don't go to those people, you're not *with* the general welfare. If you don't have your roots in a fight for

the general welfare, you're not capable of leading our nation, which is a nation constitutionally committed to the general welfare. Martin had that.<sup>1</sup>

Martin Luther King had a mission that he would not betray. Though he had no wish to be a martyr, he was emphatic that one must discover what it is for which one is willing to give one's life, in order to have a life. King recognized that the United States had been founded on a unique basis:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

King took that principled founding of the republic seriously, not fighting so much on behalf of one group or another, but that that nation might fulfill its destiny. That a section of our population had been deliberately misused and abused was both a moral problem and a very practical problem—immoral to tolerate the suppression of development of a population, and impractical to waste all that undeveloped talent. A constitutional republic simply cannot function in that fashion. As Lincoln put it, a republic could not long survive half-free and half-slave.

In the 1950s, there was a particular edge to this matter, as the United States had emerged from the World War II mobilization as the hope of the world; and the matter of becoming fully free was central to the identity of the nation—whether we would simply be the continuation of the colonialist policies of the British, French and Dutch, or whether we would be the key for conquering poverty and insuring development and stability. King's voice resonated with that distinct possibility of becoming fully free.

Today, that possibility of such a transformation has come alive again with the potential of working with China and Russia on the Belt and Road projects and the elimination of geopolitical wars.

Not long ago, a President was to take office in January, 2017, free from the imperialism-on-steroids policy of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations—a President that, horror of horrors, was open to working with Russia, and who did not see the sense of “regime-change” wars, nor of the development of a

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1. “The Immortal Talent of Dr. King.” Lyndon LaRouche [keynote](#) to the MLK Prayer Breakfast of the Talladega County (Alabama) Democratic Conference. January 19, 2014.

first-strike, nuclear war policy against Russia. The men who had found their ways to the top of our intelligence agencies, John Brennan, James Clapper and James Comey, had proven most adept in their brazen “I never have to say I'm sorry” approach to lying. One risked exposing their latest lie, at the risk of a bigger one tomorrow. They had more than a little to lose if their “Ponzi” scheme of lies were one day left unsupported.

On Friday, January 7, 2017, they arranged for Comey to meet privately with the President-elect for, as Comey aptly characterized it, his “J. Edgar Hoover” moment. That is, Hoover would make a President aware of what blackmail material was “out there,” with the threat conveyed that the President would function on the intelligence agency's leash, lest he become the victim of a public spectacle.<sup>2</sup> Comey's “Hoover” moment involved blackmailing the President-elect with the selected talking point of the Steele dossier—the claim that Vladimir Putin controlled Trump, due to Trump's (alleged) cavorting with prostitutes in a bizarre scene in a Moscow hotel room. Hence, our subtitle, “A Tale for Our Time.”

We add one update for the 2021 edition of this article. Sure enough, even though President Biden wasn't posing much of an independent streak, the intelligence community (IC) has transmogrified their “Russia, Russia, Russia” obsession to “China, China, China.” Various characters such as Michael Pompeo, Miles Yu and Richard Dearlove have coalesced around the line that the COVID-19 pandemic is due to a leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology; hence, China owes the world trillions in reparations. Since they won't pay, Biden must build a coalition to surround China with economic restrictions including the cancellation of debts owed to China—even if the whole world's physical-economic supply chain breaks down and the United States is crippled.

The new “China-gate” demands that China's “One Belt, One Road” projects for the economic and cultural development of lesser developed countries be taken as a “casus belli.” It is not enough that Biden's opposition to China be couched in terms of a competition with China. And the disciplining of Biden was notable when

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2. Comey's testimony to Congress months later, after the blackmail attempt was rebuffed, was revelatory: “I was worried very much of being in kind of a J. Edgar Hoover-type situation. I don't want him thinking I was briefing him on this to sort of hang it over him in some way.” Perhaps he was worried, yet, nothing he did was any different than what Hoover did. If it walks, talks, and quacks like blackmail, it probably is blackmail.



*The original slander described this staged photograph as follows: “PICTURED HERE (foreground) is Abner W. Berry of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. On the first row are [r. to l.] Reverend Martin Luther King of the Montgomery Boycott, Aubrey Williams, president of the Southern Conference Education Fund Inc. and Myles Horton, director of Highlander Folk School. These ‘four horsemen’ of racial agitation have brought tension, disturbance, strife and violence in their advancement of the Communist doctrine of ‘racial nationalism’.”*

he submitted to the IC’s demand to lead a 90-day “Wuhan Lab Leak” investigation. After two days of the White House’s insistence on working with the World Health Organization in their investigation, the supposedly pro-Biden, anti-Pompeo CNN launched the IC assault on Biden, surprisingly praising Pompeo’s task force on the leak, and exposing Biden “suppression” of their fine work. Within hours, Biden signed onto their demand. The IC conditioning of presidents to fall into line is an essential feature of present-day Washington, DC, but must be uprooted.

### Hoover’s ‘James Comey’ Moment

This is a story on “Russia-gate”—as J. Edgar Hoover practiced it against Martin Luther King. Admittedly, the term used then was “Commie dupe,” not “Putin dupe,” and the world was a different world. However, an enemy-image is an enemy-image; and the paralysis induced in the population’s capacity to think is pretty much the same.

It is usually assumed that Hoover’s operations against King commenced with wiretaps, with a vile blackmail letter (suggesting that King’s only way out was suicide), and with the

targeting of collaborators of King (particularly, Jack O’Dell, Stanley Levison, and Bayard Rustin) for links to Communist causes. But none of that occurred prior to 1962. It was at least five years earlier that Hoover initiated his “Russia-gate” operation against King, that later burst upon the national scene in 1963.

In December, 1956, the year-long bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama had finally been won. Shortly afterwards, King had agreed to come speak at Highlander Folk School in Tennessee where Rosa Parks earlier had been trained for her Montgomery mission. After the surprising Montgomery victory, the FBI counter-attack to isolate and kill the civil rights movement was put into high gear with the “Russia-gating” of King.

The creation of “King, the Communist,” a stooge of the “diabolical Russians,” was set afoot on that 1957 Labor Day weekend at Highlander. A photo of King at the so-called “Communist Training School” would be plastered on billboards throughout the South. A four-page, newspaper-size handout version was produced on the scandal and distributed in millions of copies—over one million of them paid for by the state of Georgia.



*Seamour Shavin, the author’s father, at Highlander after hearing Dr. King’s speech. Taken from Ed Friend’s surveillance video.*

(The author retains one of them to this day.) And when civil rights legislation finally reached the Congress in 1963, the photo was made central to the attempt to derail the discussion. It was submitted as proof of the testimony that King was run by the Russians.

The author was at Highlander on that occasion, taken there as a young boy by his parents. Highlander was run by a friend of my father, Myles Horton, in rural Monteagle, TN—about an hour’s drive from our home in Chattanooga. It was not a large gathering. I swam in the lake that Labor Day weekend with the other black and white children—photos of which, in the four-page handout, were meant to enrage segregationists. The key piece of information, later related to me by my father, about the FBI operation is not to be found in any reportage on the events, but is critical in betraying the hand of J. Edgar Hoover.

### **MLK at the Communist Training School?**

On Labor Day weekend, 1957, around 190 people gathered at Highlander to celebrate the Montgomery victory, and to hear Dr. King. Myles Horton had run an organizers’ training center there for the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) since their beginning in 1932. After World War II, the center added civil rights organizing to its labor organizing in a big way. Septima Clark was the key individual involved in the civil rights training there. Eleanor Roosevelt was on its board.<sup>3</sup> Rosa Parks arrived there in the summer of 1955.

In Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, Clifford and Virginia Durr, along with Aubrey Williams,<sup>4</sup> had been looking for a volunteer to challenge the segregation on the buses. Montgomery’s NAACP President E.D. Nixon<sup>5</sup> suggested Rosa Parks, and that summer, she attended the training center at Highlander. It is often sug-

gested that she simply got tired one day and sat down in the “whites only” section of the bus—but that does her quite an injustice. In fact, after her summer training session had ended, Rosa Parks had spent four months deliberating as to whether she would be the one to take the lead in making history. It was not a decision taken lightly. So, in December 1955, when she finally did sit down, it was a courageous decision born not of rashness or exhaustion, but of deliberate leadership.

The next twelve months involved a boycott of the Montgomery public transit system, where a broad array of previously not very political individuals were mobilized to put in long hours and put up with massive inconveniences and a lot of walking. However, a dedicated leadership proved capable of overcoming all the bumps in the road. When in December, 1956, the Supreme Court intervened against the segregationist practices in Montgomery, victory was declared. King’s declaration that day invoked his famous phrase about the arc of the moral universe.

Parks returned to Highlander the following summer, that Labor Day weekend of 1957, where Reverend King was invited to give a presentation. These two were the heroes, fresh from the year-long struggle in Montgomery. Of note that weekend, it was also where King was introduced to the anthem “We Shall Overcome.”<sup>6</sup> On the extended drive to the airport, after the weekend activities had concluded, King kept singing the anthem he had just heard, declaring it to be most beautiful. Later, King would pronounce it, the “battle hymn of our movement.” Also on that eventful weekend, four black teenagers in Little Rock, Arkansas, were working up the courage to make history the next day, when school would open.

The sanitized version of the events behind the “Commie” photo is that the Georgia Education Commission had hired an agent, one Ed Friend, to go to Highlander and take photographs and film of the attendees.<sup>7</sup> Friend’s most famous photograph displayed

3. In 1958, when Eleanor Roosevelt was scheduled to speak at Highlander, Hoover advised her to stay away, as there were possibilities of violence. Eleanor ignored Hoover’s instruction. (While there, she took some delight in seeing the black and white children playing together at Highlander that day, commenting as much to my sister.)

4. In 1933, Clifford Durr became the legal counsel for Roosevelt’s Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Virginia Durr was a founding member of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, an interracial group founded in 1938, in response to President Roosevelt’s identification of the South as the key economic stumbling block of the nation. Aubrey Williams was Roosevelt’s Assistant Federal Relief Administrator, reporting directly to Harry Hopkins.

5. Edgar D. Nixon was a union organizer for, and then the longtime President of, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Rosa Parks worked in his NAACP office before becoming famous.

6. Myles Horton’s wife, Zilphia, heard “We Will Overcome” from an attendee at Highlander, Lucille Simmons, the leader of the October, 1945 tobacco workers strike in Charleston, South Carolina. (Simmons’ source had been the Gullah community of Johns Island, South Carolina, next to Charleston.) Zilphia, who ran the music program at Highlander, taught it to Pete Seeger, who published it in 1947. It was reprinted in September, 1948 for the Henry Wallace presidential campaign. Either Zilphia or Seeger changed it to “We Shall Overcome,” finding “Shall” to be more assertive. In the early 1950s, Zilphia taught Guy Carawan the song, who, in 1960, taught it to the youth of SNCC at their founding convention.

7. See here ten minutes of Ed Friend’s silent film [footage](#) of attendees after Dr. King’s presentation. (Seamour Shavin appears at the 7:59—8:00 minute point.)

King sitting in the front row in Highlander’s auditorium, with the Communist Party member, Abner Berry, crouched in front of him. The headline read “Martin Luther King at Communist Training School”—and, six years later, in 1963—as President John Kennedy was trying to enact historic civil rights legislation—the photo, along with the headline, was waved in front of the U.S. Senate, in testimony by Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett. His testimony was seconded by Alabama Governor George Wallace.



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*Ross Barnett, Governor of Mississippi, whipping up the fans of the Confederacy.*

Barnett testified that the civil rights legislation was “a part of the world Communist conspiracy to divide and conquer our country from within.” Years later, he described the event:

I testified before the United States Senate Commerce Committee on July 10, 1963, and I told the members of the Committee that in my humble opinion if they passed those civil rights proposals into law that were then pending in the Congress of the United States that it would bring about more turmoil and strife and bloodshed than they have

ever heard of before.<sup>8</sup> George Wallace, Governor

8. Barnett knew of what he threatened. The year before, the governor famously agitated for a riot on the campus of the University of Mississippi, on the occasion of the enrollment of its first black student, James Meredith. As militant segregationists converged on the Oxford, Mississippi campus—such as General Edwin Walker, Oren Potito of the National States’ Rights Party, and Richard Lauchli of the Minutemen’s training camp north of Lake Pontchartrain—the Governor whipped up 41,000 fanatics at the September 29, 1962 football game, replete with Confederate flags, with his emotional halftime words: “I love Mississippi! I love her people, our customs. I love and I respect our heritage.” Two died and many were injured in the next day’s rioting.

## Hoover’s Games

In May 1961, J. Edgar Hoover told the new Attorney General Robert Kennedy that Martin Luther King was tainted, having attending a Communist party training school. Hoover knew better. In the 1940s, the FBI had investigated charges against Highlander for being communist and had closed the file after finding the charges baseless. Regardless, Hoover provided Kennedy a summary memorandum prepared by the “Name Check Section” of the FBI with the “commie” slur, drawn from the FBI’s 1957 operation with Ed Friend and Abner Berry.

Apparently, Hoover felt he needed more backup for his intervention on Kennedy. However, the “Name Check Section” had not done a followup security in-

vestigation of King. This caused Hoover to challenge the Supervisor of the FBI’s Name Check Section, George H. Scatterday, who then failed to back up Hoover. Rather, they found that Highlander didn’t teach communism and was not controlled by communists—though, he admitted, the Georgia Education Commission had charged King with attending a communist school.

Hoover was incensed at Scatterday for not having opened up a security investigation of King and for not going the next step with the “commie school” story. Hoover scribbled on Scatterday’s memo, “This is astounding. Upon what the first memo said, I orally advised A.G. [Robert Kennedy] that King had been associated with Communists and had been at a Communist meeting.” He instructed that a letter of censure be entered into Scatterday’s personnel file.

of Alabama, testified to the same thing the next day, but they paid no attention to our warnings. They went right ahead and passed those civil rights laws. I remember distinctly that one of the Senators of Michigan asked me: “You said something a while ago about Communism being mixed up with all these sit-ins, marches and break-ins.” I replied, “Yes sir, I said it a while ago, Senator, and I meant every word that I said.” Then I added, “I believe it.” The Senator then asked if I had any proof. He stated, “You’re making a mighty serious charge here.” I then answered, “Certainly, it’s a serious charge, but I think it is just as true as two and two are four.” He mentioned that he would like for me to offer some kind of proof. I said, “All right, Senator. Here is a picture that I am taking out of my briefcase of Martin Luther King ... at Monteagle, Tennessee.” When I handed him the picture, he did not say a word.

For unreconstructed Confederates, Governor Barnett’s role was the “high-water mark” of the Russiagating of King. It was the culmination of six years of frenzied fulminations. However, in reality, it was as pathetic as the Confederates’ “Pickett’s Charge” at Gettysburg in 1863, a century prior.

### **Hoover Escalates vs. JFK**

When Senator Warren Magnuson inquired of J. Edgar Hoover whether Barnett’s testimony was correct, Hoover certainly did not report to the Senator that the FBI had control over the ex-CP member, Berry, or had stage-managed the photo. Rather, Hoover demurred over whether the photograph was valid or not, keeping the racist governors at arm’s length. As the “Commie” charge had already done its intended damage, Hoover played the “soft cop,” measuring his words about Russian infiltration of King’s SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) to the Senate:

In substance, the Communist Party, USA, is not able to assume a role of leadership in the racial unrest at this time. However, the Party is attempting to exploit the current racial situation through propagand and participation in demonstrations and other activities whenever possible. Through these tactics, the party hopes ultimately

to progress from its current supporting role to a position of active leadership.

Today’s so-called “intelligence” agencies would be proud. In modern language, this translates as:

Putin didn’t actually run Trump’s campaign; however, he is using propagand, promoting demonstrations and such. The intelligence community has made the finding that Russia’s proven involvement means it is a step away from running our elections and subverting democracy.

Within days—on July 17, 1963—President Kennedy announced at a press conference:

We have no evidence that any of the leaders of the civil rights movement in the United States are Communists. We have no evidence that the demonstrations are Communist-inspired. There may be occasions when a Communist takes part in a demonstration. We can’t prevent that. But I think it is a convenient scapegoat to suggest that all of the difficulties are Communist and that if the Communist movement would only disappear that we would end this.

Was Kennedy soft on Communism? In our more enlightened day, we now are able to know that the President was probably involved in an obstruction of justice; but in 1963, that was considered leadership.

Kennedy’s announcement did not sit well with Hoover, who had been busy on his mission to destroy King. Hoover had been badgering the Kennedy brothers with his allegations that Russia’s KGB had its hooks into the SCLC, King’s civil rights organization. Throughout the summer, as the famous March on Washington was building towards its climax on August 28, 1963, the occasion of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Hoover increased his submissions of reports and memos to President Kennedy and the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. Hoover reported on King’s communist connections, on King’s private life, and, just so the message was clear, also on Kennedy’s private life.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Hoover alleged that a woman with whom President Kennedy had a liaison was actually a communist spy from East Germany. Though it was never the case, Hoover thought Kennedy should know what might become public.

Earlier that summer, on June 22, 1963, the only direct meeting between President Kennedy and King had occurred. The President, not trusting a conversation in his own Oval Office, had taken King on a private stroll through the Rose Garden. King later reported to close friends that it was a rather curious conversation with the President. Kennedy was not shocked that intelligence agencies compiled sexual blackmail material on public figures. However, he was, evidently, quite taken aback that such blackmail would be used, beyond extracting political favors, to actually bring down governments. King said that Kennedy asked him whether he was familiar with the “Profumo Affair” (the sex affair that was then being used to bring down the Harold Macmillan government in Britain).

It seems clear that Kennedy was concerned about out-of-control intelligence agencies—that they were intent on bringing down King, which, as he put it, would also bring down his Presidency. Kennedy pressed King to distance himself from two of his collaborators (Stanley Levison and Jack O’Dell), lest King and Kennedy would both be brought down.

The March on Washington in late August was a tremendous success. The “Profumo Affair” did bring down Macmillan’s government that October. By November, President Kennedy was dead.

### The Staging of the ‘Commie’ Photo

The unreported reality is that it wasn’t reactionary Southern governors who ran the “Commie photo” operation, but J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI. It was not a coincidence that the photographer just happened upon Communist Party member Abner Berry in King’s proximity at Highlander in 1957. Myles Horton told Seamour Shavin, my father, that:

- a) Abner Berry and Ed Friend arrived uninvited at Highlander, not together, but at about the same time.
- b) They both had lied as to who they were.



*The man identified as Abner Berry in the widely-distributed “commie” photo.*



*This unidentified man is again Abner Berry, wearing the same shirt (shirt pattern is somewhat washed out in this reproduction).*

- c) They were the only two individuals at Highlander that weekend unknown to Horton.
- d) They seemed to know each other, and during the weekend, they coordinated their actions with each other—in particular, the quick insertion of Berry into the photo op.

Racist Southern governors did not control or deploy members of the CPUSA; the FBI did. In 1957, FBI

agents and/or informers were a decent percentage of the shrunken membership of the CPUSA. The co-ordination of Friend and Berry on the infamous “photo op”—with Berry simply posing momentarily in front of those sitting in the front row—has the paw print of J. Edgar Hoover all over it.

Afterwards, Abner Berry wanted his fellow CPers to believe that he had been tricked into the staged photograph; however, his resignation from the CP two months after the photograph suggests otherwise. It is exactly what an FBI-contaminated individual says and does after exposing himself in such an operation. His usefulness as an undercover agent in the CP was over.

Further, it appears that Berry was “tricked” more than once. Of all the photos in the four-page slander, the “commie” photo was certainly the “money shot,” but the “black man dancing close to white woman” was the inflammatory shot. In the first photo, CP member Abner Berry is clearly identified in the publication, while in the second, he is merely an anonymous black man.

However, an examination of all the individuals in the 9-10-minute video will demonstrate that the black man dancing is no one other than Abner Berry. This would mean that the two most important images were staged by Friend and Berry, and that Berry’s cover story to his CP friends—that he was “tricked” into the “commie” photo—becomes even more threadbare. There were other images of the square-dancing, but they are all of normal square-dancing. No one, black or white, was dancing very close to anyone else—except for the one very non-square-dancing image. Must one assume that Berry was confused as to how square-dancing went?

Finally, it is also the case that Friend considered the dancing photo to be particularly important. He displayed some peculiar blathering on his theory of square-dancing when recounting the weekend at the Highlander Trial, March 4, 1959. First, on substantive matters, Friend gives very brief answers:

Question: “Mr. Friend, was that a subversive meeting there at that time?”

Friend: “It was subversive, sir, to the way that I have been taught to live in America.”

Q: “Explain that to the committee.”

F: “I have been taught by southern tradition to keep the races separate.”

Q: “What of anyone that [sic] promotes integration?”

F: “I can guarantee you he is not what I would call a good American, Sir.”

Q: “And what of the photo of the couple square-dancing?”

And Friend is off to the races. Only an excerpt of his one answer is given here:

F: “This is a square dance held at night.... The approach to this square dance seemed to be very harmless, in that the Negro boy will wind up dancing with the white girl.... This was called [that is, by the one calling out the square-dance instructions] and invariably he always wound up with one of the Negro boys dancing with one of the white girls in order to get them familiar, and these doctrines were taught in this school, and in order to break down the resistance to integration in that you had to do it any way that a person really wouldn’t be conscious of it....”

It turns out that, for Friend, dancing leads to blathering. But, regardless, the caller who was manipulating the situation was no one but J. Edgar Hoover.

### Hoover’s Premeditation

Earlier, in October 1956, two months before the end of the Montgomery bus strike, Hoover sent President Eisenhower the FBI’s report marked Secret, “[The Communist Party and the Negro—1953-1956](#).” Hoover wanted the President to know that the CP was exploiting “the enforcement of desegregation in every possible way....” For example, they were also exploiting, as Hoover put it, “the alleged murder” in 1955 of the black teenager, Emmett Till. Further, according to Hoover’s report, the CP’s newspaper, the *Daily Worker* explicitly praised the then ongoing Montgomery bus boycott. There, the CP claimed that the Federal Government was “...duty bound, under law, to act against officials who, under cover of law, deprive citizens of their basic and federally guaranteed rights ...”; and it called for “pressing the President and federal agencies to act against those who illegally deny Negroes their rights as American citizens.”

Two months later, the Supreme Court did actually rule against those Alabama officials and in favor of King, in his battle against segregation in Montgomery. In Hoover’s world, this would mean that the Supreme Court, in doing what the CP had called for, had become dupes of the Commies. Hoover had the intention, the



motivation, and the means to stage the “Commie-photo” a few months later.

To overlook Hoover’s role in the “Commie photo-op” of Martin Luther King, and in the manipulation of racist fears, would be akin to ignoring the role of the British Empire in the financial underpinnings of the Confederacy. In both cases, one is not so much being fooled; rather, it is more a case of volunteering to drink the Kool-Aid.

### The Underlings

The Georgia Education Commission went on to distribute over a million of the four-page handouts of Ed Friend’s work. Millions more copies were reproduced and distributed by the John Birch Society, the White Citizens’ Councils, and the like. Further, establishment papers such as the *Birmingham News* would explain to their readers that Highlander Center had been proven to be conducting a Russian-inspired master plan to sow racial unrest in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The photo of black and white children swimming in the same lake was calculated to disturb sensibilities. However, the photo of a black man and a white woman in close physical contact in a square dance was calculated to trigger outrage. This was only two years after the savage butchery of Emmett Till, a young black male who had never even touched the white woman that he was said to have offended.

The Georgia Education Commission was the work of Senator Herman Talmadge’s political operative, Roy V. Harris, a founder of the White Citizens’ Councils. In March 1956, a year before the “commie photo” operation, Harris had declared to the New Orleans Citizens’ Council:

Patience and moderation on the subject of the Supreme Court decisions destroying segregation in the public-school systems means integration.... To resist and set aside the Supreme Court decision is our only salvation....

Harris was undoubtedly involved in sending Ed Friend up to Highlander in 1957.

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10. A rare example of integrity in the public media at the time, in regard to the workings of Highlander School, was the coverage by John Popham, editor of the *Chattanooga Times* newspaper. Of some note, later, Popham would recognize in Lyndon LaRouche and his movement the sort of qualities of leadership that LaRouche had found in King.

Harris had relied upon the “intelligence” work of an FBI “counterspy,” Karl Prussian, who had asserted that King belonged to some sixty Communist front groups. The list of the “CP-affiliated” organizations—that is, organizations that, at some point, had the same position on a given issue as the CP—was very much the same list that the FBI had prepared for the 1954 HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) hearings in New Orleans.<sup>11</sup>

How did this work?

For example, one of Governor Barnett’s “Communist devils” that he singled out was Aubrey Williams, the Highlander Board member sitting in the front row of the photo with King. Williams was President Franklin Roosevelt’s Assistant Relief Administrator under Secretary of Commerce, Harry Hopkins; and, presumably, the CP had at least once taken a position in favor of relief for the poor. But don’t make the mistake of laughing at some never-to-be-repeated, alien moment in history—just open your morning paper or turn on your nightly “news” broadcast.

### The Wrong Assassination

A competent investigation of the assassination of Martin Luther King is not the subject of this article.<sup>12</sup> However, this author will proffer one more account from his father, as it bears upon the professionalism of the FBI in the week after King’s murder. In 1969, a wild, red-bearded Baptist preacher from Nashville, named Baxton Bryant, showed up unannounced at our door in Chattanooga, demanding that my father get in the car and accompany him around the state. (Since Seamour was to become the next head of the Tennessee Council on Human Relations, taking over from Bryant, there was a little bit of rationale behind Bryant’s pre-emptive actions.) As they drove to the Somerville, Tennessee residence of John McFerren, Bryant related his story:

On Sunday, April 7, 1968, three days after the as-

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11. During the “Joseph McCarthy” period, the House Un-American Committee hearings held an investigation in New Orleans in 1954, targeting Highlander’s founder, Myles Horton; Montgomery activist, Virginia Durr; FDR’s Aubrey Williams; and James Dombrowski of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). They found, amongst other things, that Dombrowski’s SCHW “has further revealed itself as a Communist-front organization by its cooperation with other Communist-dominated front groups....”

12. Dr. William Pepper’s investigation, reported in his *The Plot to Kill King*, certainly should be central to any such research.

sassination, Bryant had received a nervous phone call from McFerren, telling Bryant that he had to make the long drive from Nashville to Somerville that day—that what McFerren had to say could not be said over the phone. In person, McFerren told Bryant that, while picking up his weekly supplies from the Liberto Brothers Produce warehouse in Memphis on the preceding Thursday afternoon, McFerren had overheard a loud outburst from a phone conversation regarding an upcoming assassination. (The Liberto brothers were known as the heads of the Memphis branch of the New Orleans-based Carlos Marcello gang; and they were, to say the least, involved in the logistics of the King assassination plan.)

In the warehouse, in the late afternoon, McFerren heard Frank Liberto shouting in his office, “I told you not to call me here. Shoot the son of a bitch when he comes on the balcony.” McFerren had no idea on hearing this that it was King who was being targeted that day, until, upon arriving back in Somerville that evening, his wife broke the news to him of King’s assassination—and he realized what he had overheard. After hearing McFerren’s story, Bryant immediately drove him to Memphis in the middle of the night, where FBI agent O. B. Johnson tape-recorded McFerren’s account. Later, when Bryant pressed the FBI for their follow up, he obtained the curious response: “Oh, we checked that out. It turns out that that particular conversation must have been about a different planned hit.”<sup>13</sup> And, one must assume, it was also on a different balcony.

### **Conclusion: The Moral Arc of the Universe**

The hypocrisy of J. Edgar Hoover, or of the modern-day “Russia-is-the-devil” ideologues, is not that hard to identify or to ridicule. The question is, why would our universe have been created so as to allow matters to get to such a low point?

That the arc of the moral universe bends toward

13. McFerren did relate, on that 1969 visit, that there had been multiple attempts to set him up since his visit to the FBI in Memphis. He ironically noted that he had suddenly become more handsome, as the last year had witnessed a curious upsurge of white women coming by his combination gas station/produce stand, trying to strike up a relationship.



*The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Mountaintop, the night before his assassination.*

justice, does not mean that the assassination of Dr. King will automatically be provided justice. Leibniz’s conception, and that of Dr. King’s, involves the idea that the Creator did a good thing in creating the universe, and also in creating a being in his image.<sup>14</sup>

However, that being made in His image participates in the work of re-creation, and has the capacity to make appropriate or deficient choices. Appropriate choices—as in successful scientific breakthroughs—will find a universe that rewards such choices; deficient choices—as in an obsession for money, sex, gluttony and, in general, short-term pleasures—will leave such a society discarded by history. Similarly with Lincoln’s “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can’t fool all the people all the time.” Should you succeed, hypothetically, in fooling all the people all the time, you and your society no longer physically exist.

Our culture must tackle the difficult work involved in confronting the pain that arises from con-

14. King’s phrase is known to have been drawn from his reading of Reverend Theodore Parker’s (1853) “Of Justice and the Conscience.” Not so well known is that Parker had studied Leibniz. The relevant quote from Parker’s sermon reads: “I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. But from what I see, I am sure it bends towards justice.”

sidering the unjust treatment of Dr. King, and to solve the question as to whether our Creator really intended for such evil to prevail. Such preparation is necessary to summon the strength to change who we are for the better. Only then might the completely obvious and happy alternative—that of the United

States joining honestly and meaningfully with great projects such as those of the Belt and Road—be actually seen with open eyes. Dr. King was not wrong to have climbed to the mountaintop. In fact, he would be very happy to have company on that mountaintop!

## Lewis B. Nichols: The Interesting Case of a Case Officer

In 1957, the man that Hoover had on the Highlander case was Lewis B. Nichols, the #3 man at the FBI, just under Clyde Tolson and Hoover. (While Nichols named his second son after himself, he actually named his first son, John Edgar, after his boss. Hoover was the godfather.) Nichols reported to Tolson three days before the “commie” photo, that Highlander was gearing up their civil rights activity. Again, on September 4, 1957, two days after the photo, Nichols concluded that Highlander was the center for teaching civil disobedience. This prompted Hoover to write to the Tennessee FBI office, indicating his concern about Highlander—leading to the subsequent raid and enforced closure of Highlander.

On October 4, 1957, Georgia Governor Griffin gave a press conference, praising the wiles of his undercover investigator, Edwin Friend, and announcing that an initial run of 250,000 copies of the four-page “King at the Commie School” slander sheet was going out. Nichols was the man at the FBI who kept on top of the effectiveness of the slander sheet. Here you see an example of Nichols forwarding one of the slander sheets to Clyde Tolson.

While Nichols was clearly involved, it is not clear if he directly deployed Abner Berry to Highlander to work with Friend. It were likely that Nichols was working with someone in the FBI overseeing agents in the Communist Party. Meanwhile, Friend went on to become the photographer for the Ku Klux Klan, and, in the 1970s, for the white racists of Rhodessia. One can be assured that both groups practiced safe square-dancing.

Of note, in November 1957, just after the Highlander operation, it appears that Nichols cashed out, rewarded with a \$100,000 per year post with Lewis S. Rosenstiel’s Schenley liquors. Nichols’ role involved his assuring investigators that Rosenstiel was not

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : MR. TOLSON

DATE: October 18, 1957

FROM : L. B. NICHOLS

SUBJECT: GEORGIA COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont ✓  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Winterrowd \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

There is attached a newspaper put out by the Georgia Commission on Education which concerns the "Highlander Folk School," a communist training school at Monteagle, Tennessee. The Americanism Commission of The American Legion thought that we might like to have a copy of this publication.

**ACTION:**

It is suggested this memorandum be forwarded to the Domestic Intelligence Division.

cc-Mr. Belmont  
Enclosure  
CDD:jmr  
(3)

RECORDED - 19 61-7511-209  
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64 OCT 29 1957  
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really involved with the mob. (It was Rosenstiel’s wife who later testified in 1958 and 1959, that Hoover was seen cross-dressing at the Plaza Hotel, and performing homosexual acts that included Rosenstiel and Roy Cohn.) In 1965, Rosenstiel provided Nichols \$1,000,000 to set up the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation, promoting Hoover as a model for America’s youth.