

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# Nagging Doubts Remaining That Dr. King Was Killed As Result Of Conspiracy

By JAMES KILLPATRICK

James Earl Ray is safely locked away in a maximum security cell in the Tennessee state penitentiary in Nashville, but nagging doubts that he acted alone in killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are not so easy to lock up.

Especially in the black communities of Memphis and the nation there is an almost universal belief that the assassination of Dr. King here last April 4 was the work of some sort of conspiracy.

Most seemed to agree with Dr. King's widow, who said in Atlanta: "This plea of guilty cannot be allowed to close the case or to end the search for many fingers which helped pull the trigger. All concerned people must press the state of Tennessee and the U.S. government to continue until all who are responsible for this crime have been ap-

Ray entered a plea of guilty Monday and received an agreed-on sentence of 99 years.

The scrip for the 2 1/2-hour court session obviously was designed to lay to rest speculation about a conspiracy. Both the prosecution and defense counsel Perry Foreman told the jury there was no conclusive evidence of a conspiracy.

Ray nullified all that when he stepped to his feet and said he didn't agree with the various theories that he acted alone.

The Rev. S. B. Kyles, pastor of Monumental Baptist Church, was in an unusual position. He was one of five witnesses called by the state to prove its case to the jury affirming the sentence.

"I looked at James Earl Ray sitting there in the courtroom and I don't think a man like that could plan and execute such a crime by his self."

The Rev. Mr. Kyles said his presence in the courtroom and his opportunity to discuss the case frankly with the prosecutors made him much more willing to go along with the guilty plea procedure procedure which has been criticized by many Negroes who thought a full-scale trial would bring out more of the facts.

"I don't think there was anything which could have been brought out which would have changed the verdict or solved all the questions." He said he also thought the state had done a thorough job of investigating. "I don't feel the attorney general has tried to hide anything."

The minister, a friend of Dr. King for 19 years who was standing only a few feet away when he was shot, said he also believed Atty. Gen. Phil M. Canale and Robert K. Dwyer, Canale's executive assistant, when they said would vigorously pursue any information about a conspiracy they are given.

"But still I'm not satisfied," the Rev. Mr. Kyles said. "I can't see a man like Ray executing it himself. Maybe he's so awkward that everything just turned out right."

As for Ray's outburst in the courtroom in support of the conspiracy theory, the minister said, "I don't know why he did it."

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

PAGE 15

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The attorney general said after the trial that race was the motive, the Rev. Mr. Kyles agreed that "Ray may be a racist, he probably is."

He said Mr. Dwyer had told him in confidence about several incidents which seemed to support the racist theory. "There were certain events in his life which had to do with color. Hewas a Wallace type."

The Rev. Mr. Kyles also said that the "bad press" Dr. King received could well have led Ray to think he would be lionized for killing him. "I was told he was very disappointed that white society did not come to his rescue."

Several other Negroes were less pleased with the judicial process used.

"No, it wasn't justice," said Mrs. Corrine McWilliams, assistant manager of the Afro Lunch Room at 926 Kerr. "It looked like they had it already made up."

"There should be more of an explanation given to the public," said Allen Sims, 37, of 533 West Mitchell. "The public, particularly the black people, have been shortchanged by what has taken place in the Ray trial."

"I don't like the way he went out because it was a conspiracy and everybody knows that," said another woman in the lunchroom. She whispered so that a well-dressed white man at the end of the counter wouldn't hear.

Mrs. Maxine Smith, executive secretary of the local chapter of the NAACP, said, "It was not the 99-year sentence, but how he got it. It leaves a lot of questions unanswered and they may remain forever unanswered. Personally I don't believe he did it by himself."

Mrs. Smith said the negotiated settlement might have been an effort to prevent tension in the community during a long trial. In expressing her approval of the sentence, but not

the procedure, Mrs. Smith said she was completely opposed to capital punishment. This echoed the statement of Dr. King's widow, Mrs. Coretta King, who said the death penalty would be contrary to the teachings of her late husband. "The execution of Mr. Ray, who has not yet told the full story, would not serve the ends of justice."

It was learned that the attorney general consulted with Mrs. King and leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference about the compromise sentence. He was told they did not wish a death penalty, but would reserve judgement about the conspiracy angle.

There was surprisingly little dissatisfaction with the length of the penalty, although several Negroes said they never had expected Ray to get what he deserved.

"I don't think that many people were concerned with what happened to Ray. What they really wanted to know was who else was involved in the killing," said Mr. Sims.

Ray's attorney, Mr. Foreman, who told the court he had never expected to do more than save Ray from the electric chair, said he was convinced there was no conspiracy. He said Ray's statement in court about the conspiracy was intended to keep that angle alive so that stories he could swill would be more valuable. "He didn't want to kill the golden goose."

William Bradford Huie, the author who paid \$35,000 for Ray's story and has converted the handwritten notes into a magazine series, with a book and possible a movie in the future, said he was not surprised at Ray's statement.

"He always has contended there was another person in the rooming house with him (a statement which apparently will appear in Huie's third and final magazine article)."

Ray himself was having nothing more to say at present.

A court attachment was issued yesterday on the rifle and the automobile James Earl Ray used in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Renfro T. Hays, a private investigator who worked on the case for Ray's former attorney, Arthur J. Hanes Sr. of Birmingham, Ala., got the attachment from Chancellor Charles Nearn.

The attachment is the latest development in all \$11,000 lawsuit Mr. Hays has filed to fees he claims were owing when Ray fired Hanes last November and hired Percy Foreman, the famed Houston trial lawyer.

Chancellor Nearn said the attachment against a 30.06 Remington pump action rifle, a 1966 white Mustang and also \$7,500 in cash which is deposited in Union Planters National Bank.

The bulk of the money is the last installment of \$35,000 author William Bradford Huie paid Ray for information about the crime.

Ray's brothers, Gerald Ray and John Ray, both of St. Louis, were at the hearing yesterday but did not participate.

Assistant public defender Hugh Stanton Jr. stood in for Foreman.

Chancellor Nearn told Mr. Stanton he could file a motion to quash the attachment. Mr. Stanton said he would confer with Foreman.

Mr. Hays attorney, C. M. Murphy, argued that since the \$7,500 was in an account which Mr. Foreman has access to there was danger of it being removed.

The attorney general's office has the rifle. The car is being held in a Fire Department building but the attorney general has not disclosed the exact location.