

been inspired by the FBI memorandum, although the only written documentation of this was the notation, "handled," on the memorandum. Independent testimony to the committee indicated that the normal method the Bureau used to place material with a friendly news source was by telephone.[75] The committee deduced that the placing probably occurred the same day the memorandum was circulated, which would account for its prompt appearance in the *Globe-Democrat*.<sup>12</sup>

√ (4) *Analysis of the impact of the FBI-inspired editorial.*

—The committee carefully considered the possibility that the FBI's actions were more than defamatory and that they might have placed Dr. King's life in danger by exacerbating anti-King emotions and by seemingly justifying violent action to remove Dr. King from his position of prominence. The committee was not able to determine, however, that James Earl Ray read the *Globe-Democrat* editorial. Ray testified to the committee that he had been in the habit of purchasing a daily newspaper; [176] the evidence established, however, that he was in Birmingham on March 30, purchasing the rifle he used to assassinate Dr. King, so it is unlikely that he read the *Globe-Democrat* that day.

Even if Ray had read the editorial, he had, the committee noted, already begun to stalk Dr. King when it was published. Thus, at worst, the editorial might have reinforced a plan that had already been set in motion. On the other hand, the editorial had illustrative significance. If there had been other editorials or articles discrediting Dr. King that had been planted by the Bureau prior to the assassination, their potential significance might have been great. To evaluate this significance, however, would, as noted, require detailing all the COINTELPRO activities in St. Louis, attempting to determine if these activities had come to the attention of Ray or others residing in St. Louis who might have been involved in an assassination conspiracy—John Ray, John Sutherland, or John Kauffmann, as examples—and attempting to assess the impact, if any, of these activities on these individuals.

The committee did obtain evidence that John Ray read and absorbed the editorial. On June 13, 1972, he wrote to

<sup>12</sup>Since the March 30 *Globe-Democrat* was a weekend edition of the paper, the deadline probably would have required telephonic transmission from the FBI.

author George McMillan the following description of Dr. King:

\* \* \* King was not a saint as these try to picture him. There are millions of Rays in the United States with the same background and beliefs, who know that King not only was a rat but with his beaded eyes and pin ears look like one. A piece in the editorial sections of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* said that King led marches until he got them stir [sic] up, then used a excuse to leave, while the dumb Blacks got their head beat in by police. A week before he was killed [sic], it also said he ran down the alley and jump into a waiting Cadillac [sic].

The letter was written over 4 years after the assassination. It cannot be reliably determined when John Ray first read the editorial—before the assassination or later in prison—though his failure to reflect its content accurately indicates he may not have had it to refer to when he wrote to McMillan. What is indicated, however, is that the editorial made a significant impression on him.

The committee did not obtain evidence to indicate that any of the other individuals who the committee believes may have been involved in a conspiracy to kill Dr. King read the *Globe-Democrat* editorial prior to the assassination. The committee was only able to determine, therefore, that the Bureau-inspired editorial was used to rationalize the assassination.

The committee could find no evidence that the Bureau ever specifically considered the possibility that planting derogatory editorials might encourage certain parties to cause bodily harm to Dr. King. In its review of FBI COINTELPRO operations against a wide variety of targets, the Senate committee did note that the dangerous character of some of its COINTELPRO initiatives was, however, recognized by the Bureau. Those techniques that were seen as likely to cause physical, emotional, or economic harm to the target "were scrutinized carefully by headquarters supervisory personnel, in an attempt to balance the 'great good' to be achieved by the proposal against the known or risked harm to the target. If the 'good' was sufficient, the proposal was approved." [78]

The Bureau also recognized that some of their COIN-