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LAWYER ASSERTS RAY CHANGED HIS STORY

Ex-Counsel of House Inquiry Says That Slayer in March Talked About Mysterious 'Raoul'

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 10—Richard A. Sprague, former chief counsel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, said today that James Earl Ray had begun to change his story about the killing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. under questioning earlier this year.

Mr. Sprague, who was reached by telephone at his home in Philadelphia, said that he interviewed Mr. Ray twice in March at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee.

"I tried to develop a sort of relationship, a rapport, with Ray," Mr. Sprague said. "Obviously I didn't expect to get everything right away. But in the second session we went into greater detail. He indicated that what he had stated publicly had not been quite true."

Asked exactly what new information Mr. Ray had provided, Mr. Sprague said that in his second session, the convicted killer had talked about his sources of support after escape from prison in Missouri in 1967 and about a mysterious acquaintance whose name he had given only as "Raoul." The Pennsylvanian, who resigned March 15 as chief counsel of the House committee after a bitter dispute within the panel, said that Mr. Ray had told him that "Raoul" was perhaps not the right name or was "fictional." He quoted Mr. Ray as speaking of the "stranger who duped him" as "Raoul or whatever his name was."

Mark Lane, a lawyer who has made a business of pursuing the assassination of Dr. King and President Kennedy, said that he had last seen Mr. Ray on April 23.

Acquisitions of Ray

He reported that visits to the prisoner by investigators of a House committee after Mr. Sprague resigned were focused on the resources Mr. Ray had acquired in his year of freedom after escaping in Missouri. Mr. Lane said that the House committee staffers had asked Ray about his financial resources, and the cameras, cars, rifles and dancing lessons he had paid for or acquired in the 13 and a half months between his escape and his arrest in London.

Meanwhile, a lawyer who has represented Mr. Ray said tonight that Mr. Ray believed the nation's judicial system was

"hopeless" and that this belief was "certainly a large factor in what lies behind any escape attempt."

Disillusioned with System

The lawyer, James H. Lesar of Washington, said Mr. Ray communicated with him about a month ago and that the letter contained no hint of any plans for an escape attempt. However, he said, that from previous communications with Mr. Ray, particularly last summer, "I had a sense he had given up on the judicial system."

Mr. Lesar said he had "strongly" advised Mr. Ray not to testify before the House assassinations committee because he believed they had prejudged him guilty.

Mr. Lesar said he was not sure whether, in the wake of this advice, he was still officially one of Mr. Ray's lawyers. He said he had told Mr. Ray that he would continue to represent him but that he could not "participate in anything that

would involve him testifying" before the committee. However, he said, "he didn't discharge me," so "the status is ambiguous."

The Supreme Court refused on Dec. 13 to hear a petition from Mr. Ray seeking review of his attempts to withdraw his guilty plea in the Martin Luther King Jr. assassination.

Jack Kershaw, a lawyer for James Earl Ray, said tonight that he had spoken with his client last Wednesday and from the conversation as well as a letter he had received from Mr. Ray last week, he was "totally surprised" by the escape.

Mr. Kershaw suggested that Mr. Ray had been kidnapped.

"I do not think this was an escape," Mr. Kershaw said. "It is more like a kidnapping. There are plenty of inmates there who would do anything for money."

However, he said that he did not think any of the prison guards had been involved.

Mr. Kershaw said in his letter that Mr. Ray had "discussed aspects of his defense and planned ballistics tests of the rifle" the F.B.I. says was the murder weapon in the assassination of Dr. King.

According to Mr. Kershaw, investigators from the House Select Committee on Assassinations visited Mr. Ray five times and questioned him "about everything."

Mr. Kershaw has contended that Mr. Ray's only guilt in the assassination was that "he bought a gun for what he thought was a gun-smuggling operation."

Escape 'Raises Questions'

WASHINGTON, June 10 (UPI)—Delegate Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia, chairman of a Congressional subcommittee investigating the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said tonight that the escape of Dr. King's convicted slayer "raises serious questions."

Mr. Fauntroy said that he was sending an investigator from the House Assassinations Committee to Tennessee to "ascertain as many facts as possible" about Mr. Ray's escape. Asked if he thought Mr. Ray's life was in danger, Mr. Fauntroy said, "If there were no conspiracy he would be in no danger. If there were a conspiracy, he would be in danger. I don't know if he is in danger or not. I just have questions. I don't understand how a fellow in maximum security is able to get out."

He added, "I'm shocked and very much disturbed that a key subject in a Congressional investigation would be able to escape from a maximum-security prison."

Asked if he had confidence in Government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency to investigate the case, Mr. Fauntroy said: "I'm not commenting. I wish you wouldn't ask."

Ray's Brother Doubts Success

CHICAGO, June 10 (UPI)—Jerry Ray, the younger brother of James Earl Ray, said tonight he did not believe his brother would get far in his escape attempt.

"The terrain is too rough" outside the prison, he told a television reporter. He said he believed his brother would survive to be returned to prison.