

Ray Is Called Frustrated by House Inquiry

By MARTIN WALDRON

The man who may know James Earl Ray best said in Dallas yesterday that Mr. Ray might have escaped from prison Friday night because of a feeling of "futility."

"I know he felt that a new investigation was not going anywhere and that he was in danger of being sold down the river again," said Harold Weisberg of Frederick, Md.

Mr. Weisberg, a former investigator for the United States Senate, since 1973 has been rechecking the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on behalf of Mr. Ray in an attempt to prove that Mr. Ray did not act alone in the murder of the civil rights leader in 1968.

Mr. Ray thought that the new Congressional inquiry into the assassination, which began about four months ago, would try to prove that he, his brother Jerry Ray and J. B. Stoner of Savannah, Ga., the head of a virulently racist organization, the National States Rights Party, had been part of a conspiracy to kill Dr. King, Mr. Weisberg said.

"I'm not at all surprised that Jimmy tried to escape," said Mr. Weisberg, who was visiting in Texas. He added that Mr. Ray had reported feeling "utterly frustrated" after being questioned twice in the past three months by attorneys for the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

While agents for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the local and state police were searching for Mr. Ray and the other escaped convicts in the mountains surrounding the Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, other officials were trying to decide where Mr. Ray might head if he should get away from the area altogether.

When Mr. Ray escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, Mo., in April 1967, he headed for Canada. On that occasion, however, he allegedly had the advice and help of his younger brother, John L. Ray of St. Louis, who visited him shortly before the escape. John Ray is not available for assistance this time. He is serving an 18-year Federal prison term for bank robbery.

If Mr. Ray should succeed in getting past the scores of policemen searching the Tennessee mountains for him yesterday, where would he go?

Evidence in the records suggests that Mr. Ray would do the unexpected, the

opposite of what he might have said he would do.

In prison, he was very secretive about his plans, although he gave the impression of being open. He would tell other inmates that he planned to do certain things, but then never carried them through.

In the mid-1960's, when he was serving 20 years for robbery at the Missouri penitentiary, Mr. Ray tried to escape several times before finally succeeding.

He had told other inmates that if he did get out, he was "headed South of the border." Instead, when he escaped he went to Montreal where he spent several weeks before moving to Birmingham, Ala. Six months after that escape, he did go "South of the border" and spent two months in Mexico, smuggling marijuana into the United States.

In 1968, after the slaying of Dr. King, Mr. Ray showed interest in trying to get to Africa. He told one of his brothers that he would like to go to Rhodesia.

Mr. Ray was passing through London on June 8, 1968, trying to get to Belgium, when he was arrested. He later told his attorneys that he had been trying to get to Africa through Brussels when Scotland Yard agents arrested him at Heathrow Airport.

Even before the assassination, Mr. Ray

Prison Aides Conduct Tour of Ray's Prison

PETROS, Tenn., June 11 (AP)—Officials escorted 150 reporters and photographers through Brushy Mountain Penitentiary today to demonstrate how James Earl Ray and five other prisoners got out on a ladder in what the deputy warden called "one of the most daring escapes I've ever known."

Deputy Warden Herman C. Davis indicated that somebody would be held responsible for the escape when an investigation was completed.

The ladder itself, an oddly shaped affair of old plumbing pipe fitted together, was reassembled by prison guards in a wall tower and then demonstrated for newsmen.

Sources said the prison tour and other gestures by prison officials to accommodate a growing legion of press and television reporters had been arranged by Gov. Ray Blanton.

had shown interest in going to Africa. In December 1967, he wrote a letter to a South African association, inquiring about ways to immigrate into Rhodesia. Six months later, in London, he sought information from free-lance mercenaries about the possibility of his becoming a mercenary against African troops fighting for independence.

The authorities are also watching Mr. Ray's other brother, Jerry, who was reported to have helped Mr. Ray after the 1967 escape.

Jerry Ray was reported by prison officials to have visited James Earl Ray at the Tennessee prison early last week.

The day before Mr. Ray escaped from the Missouri penitentiary, his brother John visited him, according to prison records.

Whether Mr. Ray's flight will be seen as additional evidence of his guilt in the King slaying remains uncertain.

There have been suggestions from sources close to the House Select Committee that it has "important" new evidence bearing on the possibility that Mr. Ray may have been used as a front man by others involved in the slaying. However, there has been no indication that the committee has turned up any information not previously known, investigated and discarded.

The Justice Department made an offer that indicated that Mr. Ray might be freed from prison if he furnished evidence that he had not acted as a lone assassin, but Mr. Ray rejected it.

Three years ago, Mr. Ray testified in Federal court in Memphis while seeking a new trial. A Federal Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled that he must be allowed to present evidence about the crime and his assertion that his attorneys had forced him to plead guilty.

On the witness stand for two days at that time, Mr. Ray refused to clear up any of the mystery surrounding the murder.

John Ray told F.B.I. agents in 1968 that James Earl Ray had killed Dr. King "for money."

Several of the attorneys and investigators who worked in Mr. Ray's behalf over the years—including Mr. Weisberg, who worked the longest—believe that if Mr. Ray was hired to kill Dr. King, he does not know who hired him.

"He would not know their true identity," said Mr. Weisberg, who believes that conspirators are responsible for Dr. King's death.