

The Search

Weird Trail of King's Killer

MEMPHIS—Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation last week continued to study almost too much evidence as they sought to trace the long-nosed man who they believed murdered the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. more than three weeks ago.

The trail of evidence extended across the entire country, and the story which unfolded from the clues gathered by hundreds of F.B.I. agents seemed in some instances to tell conflicting stories.

For at least two weeks, there have been two separate investigations, one centered in Alabama and one centered in Alabama and Georgia. F.B.I. agents have been investigating two Eric Starvo Galts, two rifles, two white Mustang cars, two drivers' licenses, and an airplane ticket. Some thought this might have been the result of a deliberate attempt by the murderer and possible accomplices to lay down false and conflicting trails.

The F.B.I. has not indicated if it has uncovered a motive for Dr. King's murder. But there has been speculation within the agency that it was a hired killing. Two businessmen, one in Birmingham and one in New Orleans, have been mentioned privately as possible sources of the several thousands of dollars which Galt spent between last August and April of this year.

The Birmingham News said in a story a week ago that it had learned that the F.B.I. thought that Galt may have escaped from the United States and made his way to Cuba. "If he's still alive," the F.B.I. informant added, according to the News.

Clerk Saw Him

Galt apparently was alive at least up until the day of Dr. King's funeral. A clerk at a hotel in Atlanta said that he had

rented a room to Galt the day before the funeral and that two brunette women joined him. The F.B.I. confiscated three glasses from the room to test them for fingerprints.

Dr. King was shot to death at 6:01 P.M. in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, by a bullet fired from a Remington 30.06 caliber rifle. A rifle of this description was stolen from a Memphis gun dealer on April 2. Another rifle of the same description was bought at the Aeromarine Supply Company in Birmingham, Ala., on March 30, 1968, by Eric Starvo Galt. The Birmingham rifle was found outside the Memphis Hophouse where the shot was fired which killed Dr. King as he stood on the balcony of a motel a block away.

The young white man with a pointed nose, who the F.B.I. said shot Dr. King, drove away from the scene of the murder in a white Mustang. Another white Mustang parked about 200 feet further down the same Memphis street drove away about 10 minutes later.

A man using the name Eric Starvo Galt bought a white Mustang in Birmingham on Aug. 30, 1967. He paid \$1,995 for it to the sales manager of a Birmingham lumber firm. This car was abandoned on April 5 in Atlanta and impounded by the F.B.I. on April 11.

Two Remember Galt

In the car there were some trading stamps which were traced through the manufacturer to a Standard Oil service station in Birmingham. The station is near the Economy Grill and Rooms where Galt lived for six weeks last summer and fall. At the station, two attendants remembered Galt. They said he bought gasoline there and that they had ~~done~~ minor repairs on the car. The Mustang, the attendants said, also needed some work on its clutch. The white Mustang which Galt bought from Mr. Paisley did not have a clutch. It had an automatic shift. Were it not for the trading stamps, agents might have dismissed the service station's attendants statements as a case of mistaken identity.

Eric Starvo Galt bought an Alabama driver's license last September when he was creating his false identity. He took the test on Sept. 6 and got his permanent license mailed to him on Sept. 30. Last March 1, when

Galt was finishing up a bartender's course in Hollywood, Calif., Alabama was asked to send him a duplicate of the license. The duplicate was mailed to the Economy Grill and Rooms in Birmingham, and although Galt was in California the duplicate license was received and a bill accompanying it was returned to the driver's license division in Montgomery along with 25 cents.

For several days, investigators had assumed that Dr. King's slayer had driven to Memphis in a Mustang. Now, there is some suggestion that he may have flown. An employe of

Delta Airline in Birmingham said that a man answering Galt's description flew from Birmingham to Memphis on April 3 on Delta Flight 525, a jet which goes between Birmingham and Chicago. The man bought a ticket to Chicago but left the plane at Memphis when it arrived shortly before 2 P.M. on April 3.

F.B.I. agents spent several hours questioning luggage handlers about the April 3 flight; they wanted to know if any of them had seen a suitcase which could have had a rifle in it. A Delta official agreed last week to check the airline's manifest to see if Galt or any of his aliases were shown as a passenger that day. The official reported that the F.B.I. had confiscated the manifest not only at the Birmingham office but also at headquarters of Delta in Atlanta.

Different Descriptions

Varied physical descriptions of Galt have been widely reported. The Birmingham Galt was a quiet, almost shy man who did not drink. The California Galt who took a bartender's course and dancing lessons was a loudmouth who drank vodka and orange juice at dingy Hollywood bars.

The F.B.I. said it had determined through fingerprint comparisons that Galt was really James Earl Ray, a convict who escaped from a Missouri prison in April, 1967. Last Thursday, the warden at the Missouri prison said that when Ray escaped last year an erroneous set of fingerprints was circulated to law enforcement agencies. The warden said a new set of prints was sent out later but law enforcement officials in Georgia and Alabama said they never



HUNTED MAN: The F.B.I. has added this flyer to its "10 most wanted" list, saying that Ray, under the alias Eric Starvo Galt, is the prime suspect in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But new conflicting evidence last week suggested there may be more than one "Galt."

United Press International

received the second set.

The F.B.I. did not comment. To complicate matters further, no one who knew the California Galt or the Birmingham Galt has been able to recognize any of Ray's photographs.

F.B.I.'s Belief

Reconciling the conflicting evidence apparently has posed no problem for the F.B.I. It was said in Washington last Friday, in a not-for-attribution statement, that it still believes

that there was only one Eric Starvo Galt and that he was James Earl Ray, the escaped Missouri convict. The fingerprints of the two men match, the F.B.I. said.

Earlier, there had been information leaks from the F.B.I. that the fingerprints found on the rifle dropped on the Memphis street had been tested and had been found to be those of Ray.

—MARTIN WALDRON