



The Hunt for James Earl Ray

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The FBI's failure to apprehend the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King has led to reports that J. Edgar Hoover is not interested in catching the murderer. The reports are based partly on the fact that Hoover and King were not on good terms, Hoover having publicly branded King as "the most notorious liar in the world."

We have checked into the operations of the FBI in this respect and are convinced that it is conducting perhaps the most painstaking, exhaustive manhunt ever before undertaken in the U. S. Its G-men have checked every bar ever patronized by James Earl Ray, every flophouse he ever stopped at, every cantina in Mexico he ever visited. It has collected an amazing array of evidence, all linking Ray with the murder.

That he has not been found may be due to the possibility that he himself was murdered by those who hired him to kill King, or that he is hiding in some remote Mexican village.

If he has money—and apparently he has—Ray might be able to live in a distant part of Mexico indefinitely. The Mexico City police are efficient and cooperative, but police in the remote areas are not.

What the FBI has established about King's assassin was that he was a professional killer who had studied the suspense writing of Ian Fleming and Ayn Rand.

All the evidence points to the probability that Ray was hired to kill Dr. King. He broke out of the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967, after boasting to fellow prisoners that he intended to make a big "score" on the outside, that he might try to collect a \$1 million bounty supposedly offered by a "business men's group" for the death of Dr. King.

Four months later, on Aug. 30, 1967, he opened a safe deposit box in the Birmingham Trust National Bank and began passing out crisp \$20 bills like a big spender. He paid \$499 for dancing instruction.

He shelled out money for a bartending course,

but showed no interest in working behind any bar. He also took a course in lock-picking from a correspondence school in Michigan. His white Mustang cost \$1,995, which he paid in cash.

Occasionally he slipped \$20 to bar girls and prostitutes. In Mexico he lived with a prostitute in small towns like Jalisco and Puerto Vallarta where prices were cheap. In Los Angeles, he advertised in the hippie newspaper that he would like to meet "a passionate married woman." He paid \$1 to the Swinger's Club for the names and addresses of five girls.

All told, Ray spent an estimated \$10,000 in seven months. Yet he never held a job.

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It seems likely that Ray planned the murder of Dr. King for several months. He finally purchased the Remington rifle in Birmingham on March 30, then moved to a boarding house in Atlanta. In his room, agents found a map of Atlanta with four locations circled.

They were Dr. King's residence, his headquarters at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Ray's boarding house and the spot where he abandoned his Mustang after the murder. In the middle of the map was also a clear thumbprint from Ray's right thumb.

Evidently, Ray changed his mind about way-laying King in Atlanta and followed him to Memphis instead.

If white extremists put up the blood money it was probably not the Ku Klux Klan or the Minute Men, for they are an impatient lot who would not have waited for several months for Ray to get results. Black extremists have also not been ruled out. They might have sought to get rid of King in order to remove the prophet of nonviolence.

Note: Ray was the product of a broken home. He was the eldest of eight children. His father deserted Ray's mother, and various people adopted the children. When the FBI approached the father, they discovered that the elder Ray had not seen his son for 17 years.