

St. Petersburg Times Editorials

"The policy of our paper is very simple — merely to tell the truth"
—Paul Poynter, publisher, 1912-1950

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EDITORIAL

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The Capture Of Ray

The capture in London of James Earl Ray, accused of murdering Martin Luther King Jr., should be a major step in helping Americans diagnose the madness of violence that has infected the nation.

IT COULD have two important effects immediately:

✓ It should work against the natural disillusionment that has filled many black Americans since the assassination of Dr. King, and especially since the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

✓ The web of mysteries around the King murder should now begin to unwind, also with beneficial effects upon public opinion.

Negro disillusionment is understandable, if not justifiable. It is a sad fact that the three prominent Americans most closely identified with the cause of Negro justice — the two Kennedys and King — were victims of assassins' guns.

Until Saturday, an unanswerable question was why suspects in the Kennedy cases were captured, but despite all the nation's police resources, James Earl Ray was free. Now Ray is in jail, so there is an answer.

This question of confidence by Negroes in the ability of the American system to respond to their needs demands the closest attention. Should that confidence ever be lost, should disillusionment ever

become permanent and widespread, then the demands for justice within the system surely would become demands for a different system. That must not happen.

THERE ARE those who see the shadows of conspiracy around every national tragedy. In the death of President Kennedy, the flood of conspiracy-making seems to have passed its profitable crest. There will be those believing Sen. Kennedy's death was an organized plot, despite the mass of preliminary facts pointing to the conclusion it was the work of a single man.

The King murder is a different matter entirely. When last asked, Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark said the evidence indicated Ray acted alone.

But Ray escaped from prison only a year before King was shot April 5. He rarely worked and had no known income. Yet he appeared well supplied with money, well enough to buy a car, travel to California, to Canada and then Europe before capture.

HARD QUESTIONS of money point toward a conspiracy in the King case, questions that won't go away until they are answered. If Atty. Gen. Clark has some answers, the nation needs to know them.