

[LONDON]

King's murder: Like Dallas all over again

from COLIN McGLASHAN: Memphis, 6 April

"I met the familiar Dallas-type story of the man who had been warned of a plot. . . . One of King's close colleagues said: Memphis police have been brutal to Negroes and it isn't hard for black people to believe police were involved."

BARRING a rapid arrest and conclusive evidence, the murder of Dr Martin Luther King now seems certain to be engulfed by the doubts, suspicions, rumours and counter-theories of elaborate conspiracy that followed the assassination of President Kennedy.

Many Negroes here and elsewhere—including moderates—are convinced Dr King was killed because his marches were too dangerous to white officialdom.

That conviction may be merely the predictable emotional reaction of mistrust. But the gaps, evasions and uncertainties in the Memphis city police version of how Dr King died are doing nothing to help remove it.

Neither is the absence of any statement from the FBI of how their share of the investigation is proceeding.

United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark, however—arriving here on Friday—said: 'The authorities are very close to the arrest of the murderer.' Inquiries, he added, had gone 'several hundred miles' beyond State boundaries. There was no sign of a conspiracy.

But time after time in a two-hour

tour of the Black housing areas of this affluent 800,000 population city yesterday, I met the familiar Dallas-type story of the man who had warned beforehand of a plot to kill Dr King. One of his close colleagues, the Rev. Samuel Kyles, said today: 'Memphis police have been brutal to Negroes and it isn't hard for black people to believe police were involved in the killing of Dr King. My personal belief is that they were not.'

No search

Mr Kyles gave a clue to how the killer or killers were able to plan the murder so carefully. All day on Tuesday, he said, the radio and television networks were broadcasting that Dr King had arrived in Memphis and was staying in room 306 at the Lorraine Motel. 'It bothered me a great deal.'

Police Chief Frank Holloman said that 30-35 police were guarding Dr King when he was shot. He amended

this later to 40-45—and added that most of them were in cars. He agreed this guard had not been provided on Dr King's earlier visits to Memphis: 'The position had changed.' But there had been no prior search—'at least not a search involving rooftops and buildings.'

Mr Holloman said Dr King had been met by police at the airport and escorted to the motel—but 'I had no definite evidence of any threat.'

Police said the killer stood in the bath of a low-class lodging house opposite the new motel and afterwards fled down the rickety wooden stairs and escaped. He just faded, said Mr Holloman. The waiting police were on the scene 'within minutes.' They found a Remington rifle. It has not yet been established whether it was a bullet from this that killed Dr King.

Another familiar Dallas touch—the bullet's trajectory emerges from police reconstruction of the killing. The fatal shot appears to have been

on a downwards diagonal of 205 feet through a straggly screen of trees and scrub—over the heads of the police guards.

Two local newspapers and the city have now offered a total reward of 100,000 dollars for the arrest of the killer. Police said that in the 24 hours following Dr King's death there had been 200 fires, 17 major, in the Negro areas, 135 arrests had been made and 25 Negroes and three policemen had been injured in burning, looting and sniping.

Gun sales banned

A helicopter had been fired on. Four thousand National Guardsmen were patrolling the city last night under its second 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew. Many shops and the university closed and the sale of guns and liquor was barred.

The mayor, Henry Loeb, bitterly criticised by Negroes for not attending the airport when Dr King's body was flown to his home city of Atlanta, is under heavy police guard following threats on his life.

Dr King's funeral will be in Atlanta on Tuesday in the church where he and his father were co-pastors. And the march he planned for Monday will go on—in witness of his life work.