

Sat. 3/28/98

Ray Solely Responsible for King's Death, Inquiry Finds

■ **Crime:** District attorney says there is no credible evidence to give assassin new trial. Seven-month investigation steered clear of conspiracy theories.

William Pepper held a news conference in Atlanta with former FBI agent Donald Wilson, who claimed that he found evidence supporting Ray's assertion.

But an FBI spokesman dismissed the claim the next day as a "total fabrication."

Gibbons' investigation found no evidence that any such underworld figure was involved in a plot.

The man said to be Raoul was previously identified by Pepper, though he has not been publicly named. The Memphis Commercial Appeal newspaper said Friday that he is a "New York wine importer."

Of Raoul, the new report said:

"There is no proof to connect 'Raoul' to any activity in Memphis in 1968 What the proof indicates is that 'Raoul' was in his home city working when the King and Kennedy assassinations occurred.

"He was and is a family man who was not absent from home for long periods at a time. He had a job at the same company for 30 years. He belonged to a labor union and paid dues. . . ."

The reference to President Kennedy's assassination involves allegations from a Houston woman who, investigators for Pepper said, claimed that she knew Raoul and that he confessed to being involved in both assassinations.

Gibbons also dismissed a claim by Lloyd Jowers, a Memphis cafe owner, who said he had received \$100,000 to arrange King's murder. The man apparently made up the story to try to make money, Gibbons said.

Gibbons said his investigators were unable to take a new statement from Ray, in part because his lawyer was more interested in discussing his own theories of the crime. Ray suffers from liver disease and has been in and out of a coma in recent months.

From Times Wire Services

MEMPHIS—A seven-month reinvestigation of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. has found no evidence that anyone other than James Earl Ray committed the crime, Dist. Atty. Bill Gibbons said Friday.

"There is simply no credible evidence to support a new trial for Mr. Ray," Gibbons said. "The evidence against him is overwhelming."

Gibbons' probe began last year after King's widow, Coretta Scott King, and son Dexter said Ray should receive a trial to clear up lingering suspicions of a conspiracy in the April 4, 1968, assassination in Memphis.

Gibbons said his investigation was limited to whether Ray had an accomplice and did not go into wide-ranging conspiracy theories alleging involvement by the government and organized crime.

"Any such investigation is for someone else with a different mission or purpose," he said. "Nor did the investigation cover allegations that are so farfetched as to be beyond the bounds of credibility. We will leave those theories to the tabloids."

Ray, now 70 and in poor health, avoided a possible death sentence by pleading guilty in 1969 and was sentenced to 99 years in prison after a rifle belonging to Ray and carrying his fingerprints was found at the murder scene.

Ray later recanted his confession and contended that he was framed by an underworld figure named Raoul.

Earlier this week, Ray attorney

Harold,
Hope you are
feeling stronger.
We need you.
Best to Jim,
Paul.

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