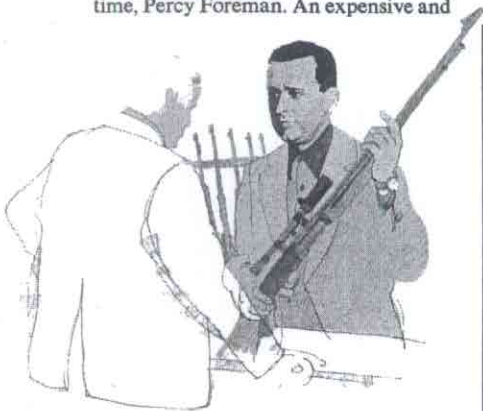


view of the FBI's work will conclude there is no evidence of any kind that the FBI 1) helped arrange the killing, or 2) failed to do everything it could to run down the sniper and any conspirators. Since the FBI is an arm of the Justice Department, of course, that will carry little weight with most critics of the FBI's role. A more independent review would be required to still all doubts, and in fact Justice officials apparently will urge that a special prosecutor or independent commission be named to make a separate inquiry.

**Raise Doubt.** Ray is now pushing for a trial, claiming that he was coerced into pleading guilty by his lawyer at the time, Percy Foreman. An expensive and



BUYING RIFLE IN BIRMINGHAM 7

flamboyant attorney, Foreman believed that the case against his client was so strong that only a guilty plea could save him from execution. Moreover, Foreman argued, a Southern jury, in the aftermath of national revulsion over the John and Robert Kennedy assassinations, would want to show that the South did not tolerate such acts. Nevertheless, one state witness, who claimed to have seen Ray leaving the rooming house after the shooting, seemed unreliable. The bullet that hit King was too fragmented to be conclusively linked to Ray's rifle by ballistics tests. No one saw Ray shoot. A sharp lawyer presumably had a chance to raise reasonable doubt in the minds of a jury about Ray's guilt. On the other hand, the lawyer would have had to explain Ray's thumbprint on the weapon, his purchasing binoculars and a rifle, and the fact that Ray rejected a room in the Memphis rooming house where he stayed in favor of one with the assassin's view.

Among the experienced writers who spent years researching books on the assassination, most (including McMillan, Gerrold Frank and William Bradford Huie) have concluded that Ray acted alone. Even if they are right, their work is unlikely to dispel all doubts in a period when, with some justification, many people are unwilling to reject readily any conspiracy theory.

## 'I'm Gonna Kill That Nigger King'

*Some key excerpts from George McMillan's book on the assassination of Martin Luther King, to be published in the fall by Little, Brown:*

### Ray's Hatred for King

In 1963 and 1964 Martin Luther King was on TV almost every day, talking defiantly about how black people were going to get their rights, insisting that they would accept with nonviolence all the terrible violence that white people were inflicting on them, until the day of victory arrived, until they did overcome.

Ray watched it all avidly on the cell-block TV at Jeff City. He reacted as if King's remarks were directed at him personally. He boiled when King came on the tube. He began to call him Martin "Lucifer" King and Martin Luther "Coon." It got so that the very sight of King would galvanize Ray.

"Somebody's gotta get him," Ray would say, his face drawn with tension, his fists clenched. "Somebody's gotta get him."

In that atmosphere, inside Jeff City, it got so that talk about killing King seemed perfectly ordinary, something rather plausible, not at all unreasonable, certainly possible. Ray and [his fellow convict Raymond] Curtis would sit around, often high on speed, while Ray would spin out the details of how he would do the job ... Ray said he would have the place all set up, all lined up, then he would get his money, his papers. It was his idea to get plumb out of the country ...

There had been the time when Ray had thought there might be a bounty on King's head, and he said, in front of Curtis, about King, "You are my big one, and one day I will collect all that money on your ass, nigger, for you are my re-

tirement plan." But as the months passed, Ray seemed to have given up caring about money, if he ever did consider it seriously, for he got so he would say, about King, "If I ever get to the streets, I am going to kill him."

### Something on His Mind

On April 24, 1967, just one day after Ray escaped from the prison at Jefferson City, he met his brothers Jack and Jerry in Chicago's Atlantic Hotel. Both brothers are ex-convicts too.

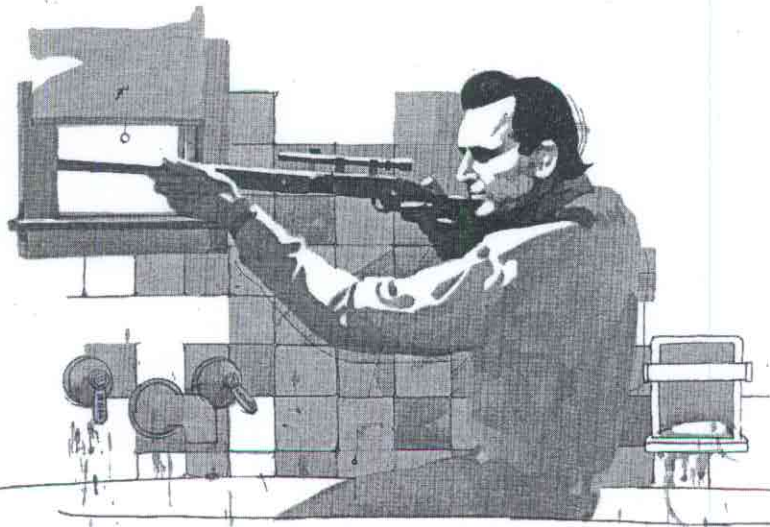
[Jimmy] had something on his mind ... They were about to get down to a reckoning of the money that was coming to Jimmy [funds he had sent out of prison], when he suddenly said, "I'm gonna kill that nigger King. That's something that's been on my mind. That's something I've been working on."

Actually, neither Jerry nor Jack was that much surprised. It was just like Jimmy to get an idea like that, so big, so grandiose. As far as the notion itself, [Jerry and Jack] could not have agreed more, at least as far as hating black people, hating liberals, Jews, but neither of them would have ever conceived of killing King ... [Jerry] told Jimmy flatly then and there that he would help him where he could, but he did not want to be in on that job ... [Jack's] reaction to Jimmy's news was one of unqualified pragmatism: "That's crazy! You can count me out of that deal. There ain't no money in killin' a nigger."

### Trying to Help Wallace

On Aug. 22, 1967, Ray and his brother Jerry met again in a North Side Chicago hotel.

The two brothers agreed to keep in touch from this point on. They would write each other ... Jerry even prom-



FIRING AT KING FROM BATHROOM OF MEMPHIS ROOMING HOUSE 8