

EASTLAND SEEKING FACTS

Little Light Shed in Ray Plot

By RICHARD STARNES
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Informed sources said today it is unlikely there will be conclusive new findings in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., despite the doubt voiced by Sen. James O. Eastland, D-Miss., that the slaying was "the work of one man."

Sen. Eastland, who heads the Senate Internal Security subcommittee, said he was "assembling all the available facts" in the case in an attempt to answer questions in his own mind as to whether the assassination of Dr. King was the result of a "conspiracy."

"The obvious question is — were there Communists involved?" Sen. Eastland said.

He noted that James Earl Ray, who was sentenced to 99 years imprisonment Monday after a ritual trial at which he pleaded guilty to the murder, had indicated there was a conspiracy with a "blond Latin" man who supplied him with funds.

MAY TALK TO RAY

Meanwhile, sources here indicated that Ray "may be talked with again" in jail in the course of the continuing official investigation of the King assassination. The Justice Department said Monday the case had not been closed.

One source made it clear, however, that no one familiar with the case expects Ray to enlarge on the cryptic hint of conspiracy that he made in a mumbled exchange with Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle at the climax of his pro forma trial in Memphis, Tenn.

"In the first place," the source continued, "Ray does not have to talk to anyone he does not want to talk to. He has the same rights in that respect that a free man has." It is logical to assume that the FBI will try to interview him again, to see if he can add anything to what he said in court Monday. But he doesn't have to agree to talk to anyone.

MUST BE WARNED

If Ray does agree to talk to Federal officers, the law requires that he be warned of his rights, just as anyone else is, and he must also be represented by counsel.

Whatever chance existed that Ray's trial would close the books on the case was doomed by the mangdog defendant himself when he insisted that he did not accept the "theory of Mr. Clark" (former U. S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark) that no conspiracy existed. His remark, coupled with the bizarre circumstances of the trial, brought an inevitable fallout of speculation

that Ray was not alone in the assassination of the civil rights leader last April. The question was further compounded when a Justice Department spokesman offered the opinion that the case is "still open and the FBI probe is continuing."

See our Editorial, Questions About Ray, on Page 22.

This, officials insisted today, is true — but only in a strictly technical sense.

"Everything in the case that could be investigated has been investigated," one source wearily explained. "Every scintilla of information in the Huie series was checked and rechecked. Every possible avenue of investigation was explored before Ray's trial Monday. Except for trying again to see if Ray can produce anything, there is no place to go."

(The Look magazine series by William Bradford Huie quoted Ray as describing the mysterious "Raoul" who may have been a go-between in an assassination conspiracy.)

"The FBI," an official well acquainted with the case said today, "never was able to identify Raoul, or to find one shred of evidence that he had ever existed outside of Ray's imagination."

DOUBTS CONSPIRACY

Mr. Huie himself told a TV audience immediately after Ray's trial that he himself now doubted the conspiracy theory, and had reached the conclusion that Ray alone made the decision to kill Dr. King. "But," Mr. Huie added, "I do not know this and Ray insists otherwise. Ray has a strange mind and a sharp eye. He takes great satisfaction out of the fact that we still have doubts, that we still have unanswered questions. He wants continuing drama in his life."

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- Mohr
- Bishop
- Casper _____
- Callahan _____
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- Soyars
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