

INTERVIEW OF CLEM J. McGOWAN

Mr. Clem J. McGowan was interviewed at his home on December 23, 1976 by James R. Kieckhefer. Mr. McGowan served as Section Chief of the Civil Rights Section, General Investigative Division, during the King assassination investigation in 1968. He retired from the FBI in 1975. Mr. McGowan was cooperative and had a good recollection of the investigation.

McGowan recalls being notified at his home at approximately 8:30 p.m. on April 4, 1968. The following morning Attorney General Ramsey Clark and Assistant to the Director Cartha DeLoach were flown to Memphis, Tennessee, to personally oversee the government's involvement in this matter. Dick Long was designated supervisor of the investigation at Headquarters since the State of Tennessee was his geographical responsibility in the Civil Rights Section.

From the beginning, the Director placed intense pressure on his Division to identify and apprehend the assassin and his co-conspirators, if any. Furthermore, McGowan stated that there were no restrictions to his knowledge placed on the conduct of the investigation. McGowan emphasized the degree of work by the FBI personnel and amount of pressure on them. In fact, he was hospitalized in July, 1968, and unable to return to work until the

following November.

Regarding the directives from headquarters to all field offices such as SACs would be held personally responsible for this case and all leads must be immediately followed up, McGowan advised that this was standard bureau procedure in major cases such as kidnappings. He added that Assistant Director Rosen stressed the importance of SAC responsibility. McGowan commented that there were numerous meetings between Division personnel and several meetings held to brief Assistant to the Director DeLoach. During these meetings, strategies, theories and utilization of manpower were discussed. He did not recall the specific individuals who suggested a search of fugitive fingerprint files or recommended a review of passport applications. Generally, McGowan advised one or more of the following individuals participated in these meetings: Assistant to the Director Cartha DeLoach, Assistant Director Alex Rosen, Deputy Assistant Director James Malley, Section Chief of the Bombing - Civil Rights Act of 1964 Unit William Martindale, and Supervisor Dick Long.

McGowan stated he knew that there was a King investigation being conducted by the Domestic Intelligence Division, but that he was not aware of the full features of this investigation. He noted that from the first day of his assassination investigation Assistant Director Sullivan sent two agents to assist him. These two people occupied

the office near or next to Supervisor Long. They read, to his knowledge, all the incoming material and did not leave until James Earl Ray was identified as the assassin of Dr. King. He believed their role was to assist in the event that an international conspiracy arose or some domestic group under their bureau jurisdiction was deemed to be involved. He could not recall their names.

McGowan, based on his knowledge of the FBI investigation, is of the opinion that Ray was a racist and desired to make something of himself by committing the crime of assassination. He did not feel that Dr. King had to be the target of his crime. He also is of the opinion that Ray obtained his funds by committing numerous criminal activities such as robbery or burglary, or by participating in the transfer or sale of drugs.

McGowan stated that federal jurisdiction was found in 18 U.S.C. 241 when it was learned that the assassin had exchanged rifles in Birmingham on the advice of a brother. McGowan had worked in the civil rights field since 1952 and stated he was quite familiar with FBI investigative procedure. He viewed the enormous amount of work by the FBI as necessary in this case; and it resulted in a responsible and successful effort.