

news world forum

Who's Ray's new ally?



James Earl Ray, appearing before the House Select Committee on Assassinations and on national television, did what he's done all of his life—lied.

But the shaky and unlikely story of this confessed murderer of Martin Luther King Jr. didn't surprise anyone or shed any new light on King's death.

His testimony did, however, bring into question Jesse Jackson's judgment, credibility and motives.

"Ray's New Ally," Time magazine called Jesse Jackson. This "ally" of Ray's, after meeting with him for a few hours and exchanging letters, said that he had "profound doubts" about Ray's guilt.

"It may well be that Ray was a diversion in a grander scheme," said the self-proclaimed Country Preacher. Immediately, on-the-spot from the Bushy Mountain Penitentiary in Tennessee, Jackson called Benjamin Civiletti at the Justice Department to arrange a meeting with Attorney General Griffin Bell "to challenge the Justice Department's position on this case."

But the House committee chairman,

Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, gave Ray all of the opportunity he needed—to hang himself and cast a shadow over PUSH's national director.

Ray's first day in court

On the first day of hearings and before a national television audience of millions, Ray read self-righteously from a 38-page statement, "I would have told the trial court that I did not kill Martin Luther King Jr."

He pleaded guilty in the first place, he explained, because he was framed by his lawyers, beaten by prison officials, lied about by the FBI and the media, etc.—the same story he's been telling for the past 10 years.

Stokes asked about the lie detector test he consented to for Playboy magazine. The magazine said the machine showed that Ray lied when he denied killing King, but told the truth when he said that no one had paid him for the murder.

Not denying that he lied, Ray stumbled, "It was intended to be the truth." But why shouldn't he lie? He's a 50-year-old small-time crook doing a 99-year sentence.

The second day of the hearings made Jackson's innocently proclaimed ally's lack of veracity all too clear. In his typical shallow arguments, Ray contended that he was always following "Raoul's" orders. This poor little innocent gangster had just checked into 422½ South Street Main St.—the Memphis rooming house from which

Ray was convicted of shooting King on the Lorraine Motel Balcony—with "a rifle with military specifications" to show to his mystery-man-conspirator "Raoul."

However, Stokes would have none of that. He showed, in intensive questioning, that Ray had, indeed, apparently stalked King for two weeks—New Orleans, Selma, Atlanta and finally Memphis—before shooting him in the head on April 4, 1968.

These are all lies, perpetrated by the FBI, a conspiracy to frame him, Ray claimed. Jesse Jackson had also suggested a conspiracy, "I do not believe he killed Dr. King . . . The very thought of a conspiracy is what compels me to help him."

At one time, FBI was accused

The FBI, before James Earl Ray vindicated it before the televised House hearings, had been openly called King's killer by many of the civil rights types and conspiracy buffs. Nothing short of a thoroughly corrupt, racist, "dirty-tricks" agency with a phalanx of hit-men would solve King's death for them.

Granted, recent FBI documents made public make it very easy for the citizenry to believe the worst about the G-men's integrity. For sure, there were abuses—the most recently revealed ones against Dick Gregory ranking among the most pernicious—by the FBI during the civil rights movement and against the left.



WASHINGTON: James Earl Ray (right) takes the stand for a third day before the House Assassinations Committee as his attorney, Mark Lane, raises an objection on behalf of his client. Jesse Jackson, Ray's new found "ally," has said he has "profound doubts" about Ray's guilt.

There is also strong evidence to suggest that J. Edgar Hoover cared very little for Afro-Americans or their rights—and even less for Martin Luther King Jr.—but those facts do not qualify an entire apparatus of government killers.

Jesse Jackson, perhaps, was given some evidence that Ray did not share with the House committee or the television audience that would belie this logic. Or could it be possible that Jackson's propensity for publicity at any cost, his political stunting and grandstanding have finally placed him

under house arrest to his own personal motives?

It's my guess that he doesn't realize just how much he's compromised himself politically and how much of his credibility he's spent by claiming media coverage.

Jackson's reckless conduct

The PUSH leader has to be aware that the rumor mill in Washington has the FBI and the House committee's investigators close on the heels of a convicted killer of his mentor and a black member of King's organization as a prime suspect in a plot against

King.

Jackson's conduct in the King-Ray matter is reckless and, at best, suspicious. If it had not been for the House Select Committee on Assassinations and Rep. Louis Stokes, Jackson's shenanigans may have diverted attention away from the real plot.

One cannot escape the question: Of all the unattended and unfinished work in the civil rights arena, why is Jesse Jackson defending James Earl Ray, the proven two-bit crook and liar?