

H. WEINBERG

**Socialist Action**

# Who killed Martin Luther King? Memphis businessman admits conspiracy

**SOCIALIST ACTION JANUARY 1994**

BY ROLAND SHEPPARD

A Memphis, Tenn., businessman has admitted that he hired the man who assassinated Martin Luther King and that he collected a \$100,000 bounty for organizing the assassination. This information first appeared in an exclusive article in the Dec. 12, 1993, edition of the British newspaper, *The Observer*. The information was confirmed subsequently by the Dec. 16 ABC "Primetime" television show and *The New York Times*.

Martin Luther King was assassinated while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis on April 4, 1968. The official account of the murder was that

**Black leaders, like King, were hounded, harassed, spied on, and slandered through a "dirty tricks" campaign. King had especially made himself a thorn in the government's side because of his outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War.**

James Earl Ray, acting alone, killed King. It was alleged that Ray fired at King from

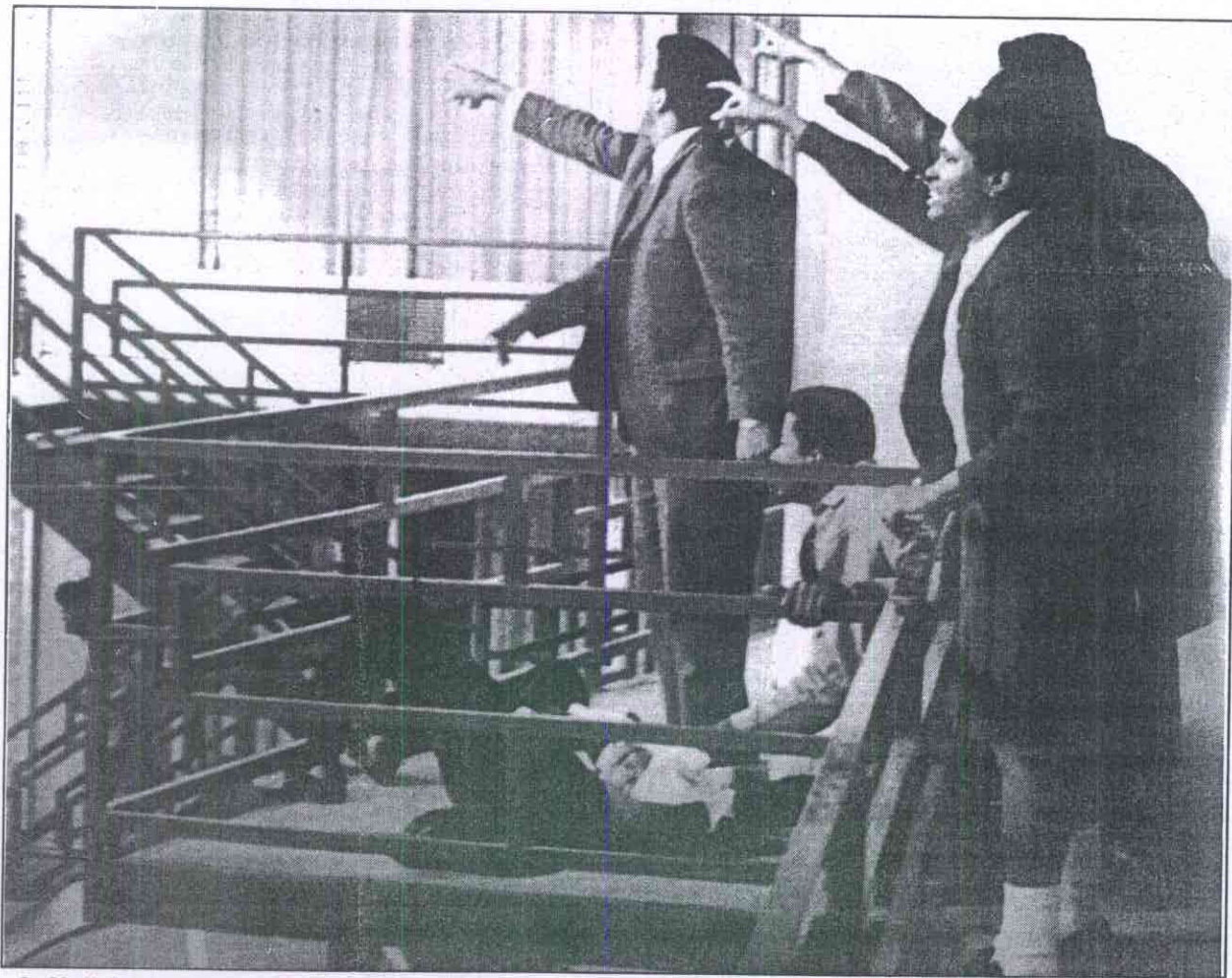
a boarding house across from the motel. The official police and FBI investigation also concluded that there was no conspiracy involved in the assassination.

Since that time, however, there has been a lot of controversy over the official account of the assassination. In fact, the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in 1978 that Ray had been hired by "conspirators unknown."

*The Observer* reported that the Memphis businessman and four other "conspirators" have videotaped confessions with their lawyer, Lewis Garrison. Last June, they requested that a grand jury be convened in Memphis to grant them immunity in return for their testimony—which will also include revealing the names of the people who hired the businessman. A grand jury will be empaneled—according to the ABC "Primetime" program—due to the public disclosures of the confessions.

Key claims reported in *The Observer* are: 1) The killer was not Ray. 2) The shot that killed King came from the shrub area facing the motel, and not from the boarding house. 3) The businessman who hired the killer and received the bounty also retrieved





JOSEPH LOUW

Dr. Martin Luther King lies mortally wounded on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel as his entourage points to the source of the shots.

the murder weapon after the shooting.

4) The businessman was assured that a "decoy" (presumably Ray) had been set-up to be framed for the shooting. He was also informed that people from "New Orleans" would pay \$100,000 to arrange the murder.

The allegations that a Memphis businessman was involved in putting out a contract on King rings true. The Rev. King was in Memphis specifically to lend solidarity to a militant strike by sanitation workers, the great majority of whom were Black, who were in a face-to-face confrontation with the city government and the Chamber of Commerce.

#### Role of FBI

From the article, it appears that a 16-year investigation by Dr. Bill Pepper, Ray's lawyer since 1988, compelled the five peo-

ple involved to offer their confessions in return for immunity. The "conspirators" believed it would be just a matter of time before the conspiracy was uncovered.

Pepper believes that the new evidence will clear Ray. The attorney has long held the position that Ray was, in fact, a decoy and that his conviction was a cover-up of the assassination.

Pepper is quoted in *The Observer* as saying: "I believe the trail [of the assassination] ultimately leads back to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, and particular associates of his in the business and intelligence communities. I am convinced that in the not-too-distant future, the world will have a very good idea of who was really behind Dr. King's assassination."

The confessions allege that the conspirators had picked the Lorraine Hotel as the

site for the assassination before King arrived in Memphis. The businessman was approached, in part, because his enterprise was near the hotel.

Karl Evanzz's book "The Judas Factor" points out that "several days before his [King's] murder, the FBI sent an anonymous memo to him accusing King of being an 'Uncle Tom' for staying at a white hotel instead of the African American-owned Lorraine Hotel." Thus, the FBI was largely responsible for insuring that King would be at the location for which the assassination was planned.

#### Open the files!

Since King's assassination, secret government files have been published revealing that intelligence and police agencies carried out a massive disruption campaign against the Black liberation struggle in the 1960s.

Black leaders were hounded, harassed, spied on, and slandered through a "dirty tricks" campaign.

The evidence presented in Evanzz's book and in other accounts makes it clear that the U.S. government worked to disrupt the activities of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Last year, for example, it was disclosed that U.S. Army Intelligence teams tailed and spied on King right up to the moment he was murdered.

King had especially made himself a thorn in the government's side because of his outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War. His elimination from the political scene contributed to the decline of the movement—and the subsequent rollback of many of the gains that the Black struggle had won.

Bill Pepper, Ray's attorney, told *The Observer* that if he frees his client, his next goal will be to expose the real conspirators, who he says sit in back rooms, government offices, and board rooms far from Memphis.

All of the secret files of the government must now be opened to establish the truth about the assassinations of both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

Open the files now! ■

---