

# New report asserts plot to kill Dr. King

## A British paper said a businessman confessed. A U.S. district attorney general called the story a "sham."

REUTERS

LONDON — A retired U.S. businessman has confessed to hiring the assassin of civil rights leader the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and has applied for immunity from prosecution in return for naming the gunman, a British newspaper reported yesterday.

The paper, the Observer, said the man's testimony and that of four other witnesses, also seeking immunity, would apparently exonerate

James Earl Ray, who is serving a 99-year sentence for the assassination. Ray has maintained he is innocent.

It said Wayne Chastain, an attorney acting on the instructions of Ray's lawyer Bill Pepper, has applied for a hearing before a grand jury in Tennessee in which he will name the businessman and four other witnesses.

District Attorney General John Pierotti told the Associated Press yes-

terday, however, that he has refused the request of Memphis lawyer Lewis Garrison, who is reportedly representing the five witnesses, to reopen the investigation into Dr. King's 1968 assassination. "I believe it is a sham and a fraud upon the public," Pierotti told the Commercial Appeal in Memphis on Saturday.

Former U.S. Attorney Hickman Ewing also dismissed Garrison's allegation, suggesting that money might be the motivation.

But Garrison defended his story yesterday, saying that truth had made his clients come forward. "If the public wants to hear from them and know what really happened that day — great," Garrison said. "If not, I'll close my file."

Chastain, meanwhile, is asking for the five witnesses to be subpoenaed to give evidence in return for immunity. The Observer said they came forward reluctantly after being convinced that a 16-year investigation by Ray's attorney, Pepper, was closing in on them.

Dr. King was killed on the balcony

of a Memphis motel on April 4, 1968, and Ray, who was living opposite the hotel, was jailed in 1969.

The prosecution said he acted alone. But the Observer says the evidence of the five — two men and three women — will allegedly show the killer was not Ray

and that the shot that killed Dr. King came from an area facing the hotel and not Ray's room.

**The five witnesses want immunity, the newspaper said. The D.A. won't reopen the case.**

The paper said the evidence also will show that the businessman who hired the killer retrieved the murder weapon after the shooting and was assured that a decoy, presumably Ray, had been selected to take the blame.

According to the businessman, who is white, the gunman was a local man with a reputation for being a marksman and received \$10,000. It is not known whether he is still alive.

The businessman went on to become a multimillionaire, building his empire on the \$100,000 he was paid for organizing Dr. King's assassination, according to the newspaper.

He said he was hired by two men, a local entrepreneur with Mafia links and another man.

Of the other witnesses, two are black women who worked for him and one is a black woman who was his lover. The other witness was a black man who was approached later by the businessman to take care of people who knew too much.

The businessman's lover apparently saw him breathlessly enter his premises holding the rifle after the shooting, the paper said.