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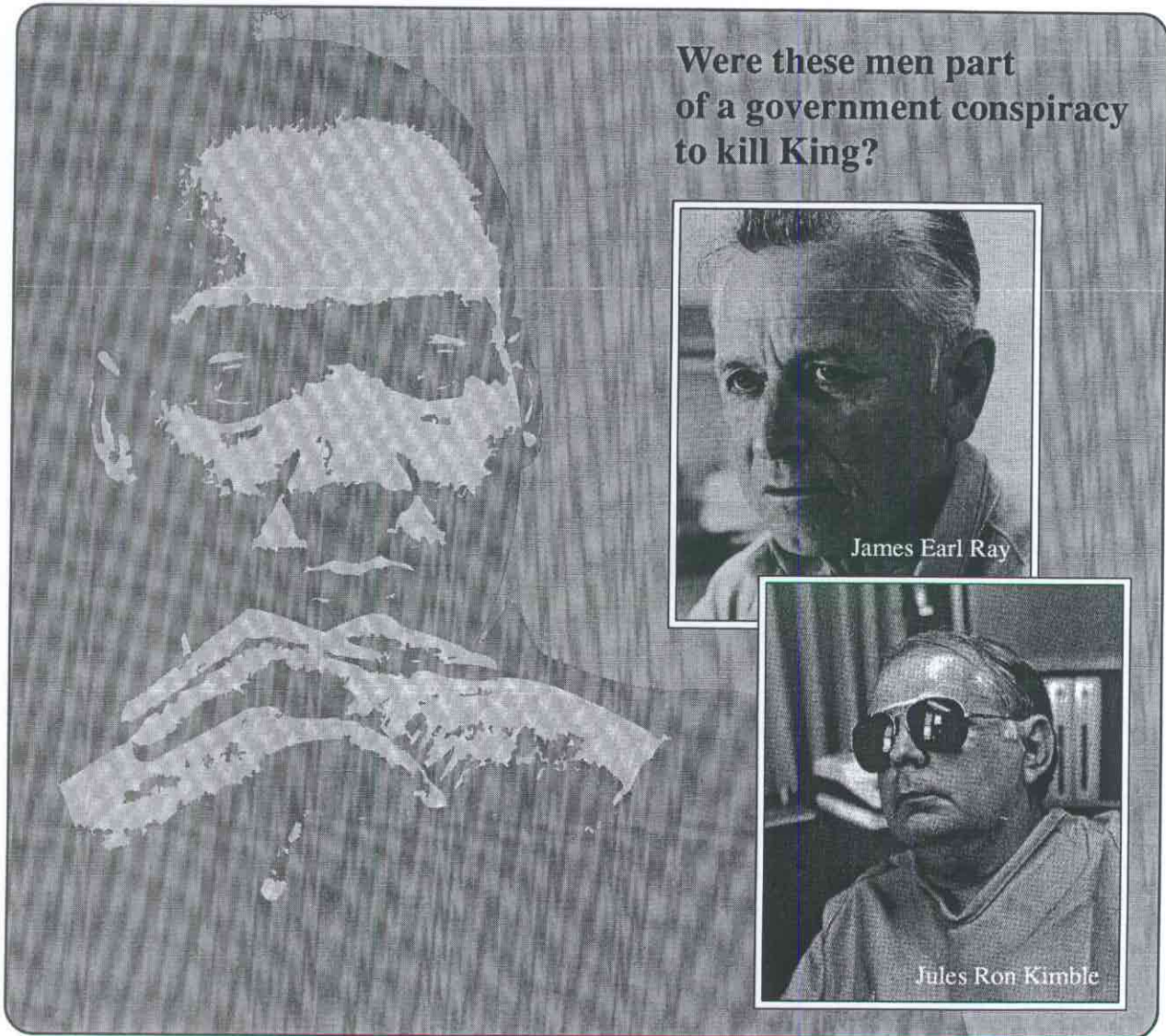
Covert Action

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The Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.



Editorial

This issue of *CAIB* is a glimpse at the many faces of the U.S. intelligence apparatus. From the CIA's involvement in a variety of conflicts in SouthEastAsia to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., we examine the breadth of illegal activities which the government attempts to cover up and which the mainstream media is afraid to explore.

Information about CIA operations in Central America continues to surface. The CIA organized and controlled a group of Costa Rican intelligence officers who, for large retainers, spied on their own government. For many years the CIA clouded the fact that Manuel Noriega's relationship with the Medellín Cartel made him a very rich man. However, when Noriega began to tire of toeing the U.S. line, George Bush decided to act. Panama was invaded, thousands of civilians were killed, and Noriega was captured. Now Noriega will stand trial for activities that the U.S. once condoned.

Perhaps even more appalling is the U.S. backing of the Khmer Rouge in their attempt to overthrow the Hun Sen government in Cambodia. Into this devastating conflict the

U.S. government has sent food and covert military aid to support the guerrilla coalition. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge is by far the strongest military contingent. If victorious, they would be in a position to gain complete power and return war-ravaged Cambodia to the nightmarish rule of the 1970s.

Finally, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. must be reexamined in response to new evidence which reveals that James Earl Ray may have been set up. A self-professed political assassin, Jules Ron Kimble, claims that he was part of a conspiracy to kill King. Kimble says that he helped several members of the CIA plan and carry out King's murder. Additionally, new evidence suggests that there was a CIA "identities" specialist who helped Ray develop his aliases.

These articles, as well as others in this issue, demonstrate how U.S. covert operations repeatedly work in direct contradiction to our society's professed values. If the United States is ever to achieve the openness and democracy that it so loudly touts to the world, it will first have to do away with the destructive operations of the CIA. ●

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The Murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

by John Edginton and John Sergeant

Editors' Note: In April 1988, John Edginton, a British independent film maker, began an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Edginton had just completed a film about King's life ("Promised Land") and was intrigued by comments by King's friend, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, that King was murdered by government forces. By January 1989, Edginton had gathered enough evidence disputing the official verdict that BBC Television agreed to fund a documentary: "Who Killed Martin Luther King?" John Sergeant joined the team as associate producer. The film aired in England in September 1989 and on cable television in this country in March 1990. The following article is derived from information gathered in their investigation and raises questions about government complicity in the assassination of the civil rights leader.

Introduction

Equivocation, uncertainty, and doubt have never been fully dispelled with respect to the untimely death of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. This could be put down in part to the intensity of public suspicion over the killing of President John F. Kennedy. But suspicions linger primarily because of the inherently unconvincing nature of the official version of events.

In an apparently *bona fide* effort to lay these ghosts to rest, the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) concluded an investigation in 1979 which reaffirmed the guilt of convicted assassin James Earl Ray but conceded the probable existence of a conspiracy behind him—headed by a group of St. Louis businessmen with ties to organized crime. It referred its leads to the Justice Department which quietly closed the case in 1983.

However, new revelations clearly demand official answers. The case should now be reopened and the whole 22-year saga of James Earl Ray's conviction and imprisonment should now be rigorously reviewed.

The first important new revelation involves Jules Ron Kimble, a convicted murderer serving time in a federal prison in Oklahoma. In a recent interview, Kimble admitted being intimately involved in a widespread conspiracy that resulted in the assassination of King. He said that this conspiracy involved agents of the FBI and the CIA, elements of the "mob," as well as Ray. In the late 1970s, investigators for the HSCA interviewed Kimble but, according to their report, he denied any knowledge of the murder. Now, for the first time, Kimble publicly admits participating in the assassination.¹

Kimble, a shadowy figure with ties to the U.S. intelligence

community and organized crime, corroborates much of Ray's self-serving story. He alleges that Ray, though involved in the plot, did not shoot King and was in fact set up to take the fall for the assassination.²

Jules Kimble, in implicating the mob and the CIA in the assassination, claims to have introduced Ray to a CIA identities specialist in Montreal, Canada, from whom Ray gained four principal aliases. In August 1989, a former CIA agent serving in Canada around the time of the King assassination, confirmed that the CIA did indeed have such a false identities specialist operating out of Montreal in the late 1960s.³

An investigation by Dr. Philip Melanson revealed that the identities that Ray adopted during the period of the assassination were far more elaborate than previously realized. Melanson concluded that in at least one instance, Ray's alias could only reasonably have derived from a top secret security file accessible only available to military and intelligence agencies.⁴

Finally, Ray who has been protesting his innocence for over 20 years, has always claimed that he was set up for the assassination by a mysterious "handler" called Raoul whom he had first encountered in Montreal nine months before. The former CIA agent who served in Canada named the agency's Montreal identities specialist at the time as Raoul Maora.⁵

Jules Ron Kimble cannot be dismissed out-of-hand. For a start he has a long record of mob activity and violence, often with political overtones. He is currently serving a double life sentence in El Reno, Oklahoma, for two murders he admits were political. He has proven links to the Louisiana mob empire of Carlos Marcello (frequently accused of involvement in political assassination) and admits to having done mob-related work in New Orleans, Montreal, and Memphis during the late sixties—three key cities in Ray's odyssey.⁶

Investigative records from the period confirm Kimble to have been involved with the underworld and the KKK, to have been in Montreal in the summer of 1967, and to have been called in for questioning in connection with the Kennedy assassination by then-New Orleans District Attorney, Jim Garrison. During this questioning, Kimble admitted being linked to the local FBI and CIA and Garrison accepted this admis-

2. *Ibid.*

3. Telephone interview with ex-CIA agent who requests anonymity, August 1989; in-person interview in December 1989.

4. See Philip Melanson, *The Murkin Conspiracy* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

5. *Op. cit.*, n. 3.

6. A July 1989 phone interview with a Baton Rouge police detective confirmed Kimble's close ties to organized crime. State investigator Joe Oster also investigated Kimble because of allegations of Kimble's involvement in the murder of union leader Victor Busie. In this investigation, Oster found that Kimble had ties to the Ku Klux Klan and organized crime.

1. Kimble made this admission while being interviewed for the film documentary *Who Killed Martin Luther King?* The interview took place at the El Reno Federal Penitentiary, El Reno, Oklahoma, in June 1989.

sion as true.⁷

Like his contemporary, Lee Harvey Oswald, Jules Kimble had been living in Crescent City, California during the early 1960s and was associating with gangsters, segregationists, the FBI and, he forcefully asserts, the CIA. He is known to have been in contact with David Ferrie, the dead CIA flier who has been repeatedly implicated in the assassination of John Kennedy.⁸

Most astonishingly, Jules Ron Kimble is not dismissed out-of-hand by James Earl Ray. When Ray was recently confronted with the alleged connection, he said that Kimble may have been one of two mysterious figures he saw on the afternoon of the assassination but he wasn't sure. Ray then asked if Kimble was in prison (which he was) but rejected Kimble's allegations about their connection as some sort of "government disinformation."⁹

Although James Earl Ray, now 60, stands convicted of shooting Martin Luther King, most observers agree the truth of what really happened has never been established. New evidence from Kimble, compounded with other recent revelations, establish that the issue is not whether government operatives were involved in the King assassination but rather how high up the chain of command the conspiracy ran.

The Lone Gunman

In late March 1968, the Rev Martin Luther King Jr. came to Memphis to support the city's striking sanitation workers who were predominantly black. He led a march of 6000 protesters which disintegrated into violence between police and demonstrators, giving conservative forces the opportunity to scorn King's doctrine of nonviolent political struggle. Determined to prove the sanitation workers' protest could be peaceful, King returned to Memphis on April 3rd to lead a second march.

On April 4, a few minutes before 6 p.m., Dr. King walked out on the balcony outside his second-floor room at the Lorraine Motel. He was scheduled to attend a dinner at the local Reverend Billy Kyles's house and was bantering with his chauffeur down in the parking lot below. At 6:01 p.m. there was a shot. A high-velocity dum-dum bullet hit Dr. King in the neck, severing his spinal column and leaving a massive exit hole. One hour later, in St Joseph's Hospital in Memphis, King died.

Public suspicions over the investigation of Dr. King's death surfaced almost immediately. In 1968 there was already a growing body of opinion at odds with the official explanation that Lee Harvey Oswald had been the lone assassin of John F.

In the early 1960s, Kimble was associating with gangsters, segregationists, the FBI and, he forcefully asserts, the CIA.

Kennedy. In Memphis, King too had been shot with a high-velocity rifle, ostensibly from a window. Moreover, like Dallas, the assassination had taken place under the noses of the authorities in broad daylight.

Soon after his murder, questions surrounding the assassination of King began to emerge. How had so many police arrived so quickly on the scene—within

moments of the shot being fired—yet failed to spot the assassin either arriving or departing? Who, in an apparent attempt to distract police radio control, had broadcast a hoax car chase involving a Mustang on citizens band radio less than half an hour after the police radio announced the suspect car to be a white Mustang? If, as the police claimed, the shot had come from the bathroom window, why did at least three people claim to have seen a gunman in the bushes across the street?

The official scenario of how Ray shot King is as follows: Ray was supposed to have checked into a rooming house on Main Street, the back of which faces the Lorraine Motel; established a sniper's post in the bathroom; shot Martin Luther King; panicked and dropped his belongings on the sidewalk as he fled the rooming house, leaving the rifle to be discovered with his fingerprints on it; and then raced out of Memphis in a white Mustang.

Suspensions of a conspiracy in the murder of King did not diminish with the capture of Ray, though officials continued to maintain he was a lone assassin. On the contrary, expectations of major revelations at Ray's forthcoming trial were very high. But these expectations were never gratified. The public was kept ignorant of the many anomalies and peculiarities in the case, some of which were even ignored by investigators.

The most prominent of these inconsistencies in the state's case was the self-contradictory and inconsistent testimony of its chief witness, Charlie Stephens. Stephens, who the state claims saw Ray emerging from the bathroom, did not recognize Ray in a photo he was shown shortly after the assassination. The state also failed to mention that Stephens was an alcoholic and was drunk the afternoon of the King murder.

Why Did Ray Plead Guilty?

It has never been established where the idea of Ray's guilty plea originated but certain facts stand out. Ray's lawyers in the original trial were Hugh Stanton Sr., the Shelby County Public Defender and Percy Foreman. It is interesting to note that earlier Stanton had acted as lawyer to Charlie Stephens—the prosecution's chief witness. No one in the judicial system, however, saw his acting as Ray's attorney as a conflict of interest.

In December 1967, Foreman proposed to prosecutor Phil Canale that Ray could be convinced to plead guilty in exchange for a slightly reduced sentence and no death penalty. Canale was favorable to the idea and consulted with the King family lawyer, Harry Wachtel (former Governor of Ten-

7. Statement taken from Jules Kimble by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison on October 10, 1967.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Interview with James Earl Ray, June 1989, Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, Tennessee.

nessee), officials at the Justice Department, and finally the Attorney General. Everyone agreed that the guilty plea was a splendid idea. It was Foreman's job to convince Ray.¹⁰

Ray would have none of it. And it took more than two months for him to cave in, despite all manner of tactics employed to pressure him and his family into agreeing. Foreman even assured Ray in a letter that there was a 100% chance he would be found guilty and a 99% chance of the electric chair (even though the state's case was very weak and no one had gone to the chair in Tennessee in more than a decade). Ray also discovered he could not change his lawyer again and that Foreman was doing nothing to develop a defense. Finally Ray somehow believed that if he pleaded guilty he could dismiss Foreman, demand a new lawyer, and receive a new trial.¹¹

The so-called trial took place suddenly on March 10, 1968 and following a lengthy list of charges the state would have tried to prove, Ray pleaded guilty as arranged and was sentenced to 99 years. He immediately petitioned for a new trial, which was denied, and has been petitioning on every conceivable ground ever since, also to no avail.

In 1974, however, Ray succeeded in prying from the state an evidentiary hearing. The hearing was to determine whether Ray had enough grounds for a new trial based on his being negligently represented by attorney Percy Foreman. Harold Weisberg, a veteran of the John Kennedy case and a writer, was taken on as an investigator on Ray's legal team.

Major Inconsistencies in the State's Evidence

Weisberg's investigation was a searching and vigorous one. Although he differs with many experts in his conclusions — he believes Ray to be totally innocent, a fall guy or "patsy" — many of his arguments about the weakness of the official case and the existence of a conspiracy remain persuasive to this day. Through his relentless pursuit of FBI documentation under the Freedom of Information Act, Weisberg found many documents which revealed numerous irregularities in the Bureau's investigation. Among other inconsistencies, the state's examination of the alleged murder weapon is very revealing.

An internal FBI report on the bullet which killed King said that it was too mangled to compare against the rifle that allegedly fired it. The report states that "...its deformation and absence of clear cut marks precluded a positive determination." Yet the evidence presented at Ray's "trial" gave the impression that the "death slug" was proven to have been fired from the rifle.¹²

Weisberg consulted with a ballistics expert who examined the bullet and concluded that there were indeed sufficient markings on it to make test-fire comparisons. The ballistics expert is adamant about the fact that the FBI could and should have carried out such tests.¹³

10. Interview with Phil Canale, Memphis, Tennessee, June 1989; interview with Dr. William Pepper, Memphis, Tennessee, June 1989.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Internal FBI ballistics report, released under the Freedom of Information Act, dated April 17, 1968.

13. Herbert McDonnell, the ballistics expert who made this claim, is regarded as a leading authority. He presented these views in an interview conducted June 1989, Memphis, Tennessee.

One of Weisberg's most powerful arguments concerns the crime scene itself. How, he wonders, did the assassin, who would have had to stand in a bathtub to fire at King, manage to take a single shot, run from the bathroom into the bedroom, bundle up the rifle and a bizarre collection of personal belongings in a blanket (ensuring that the belongings but not the bathroom or the bedroom had his fingerprints on them), run the length of the rooming house, down a flight of stairs, dump the bundle in the street, walk calmly to his waiting Mustang and drive away within the one to two minutes it took uniformed officers to reach the same location?

Official records as to precisely what took place on the street outside the rooming house — Main Street, one block west of the motel — in those critical minutes, are astonishingly chaotic.

At Ray's trial in 1969, testimony was given by Inspector N.E. Zachary of the Memphis Police Department that he found the rifle and the bundle first. By the time of the 1974 evidentiary hearings (after various books had researched the question), the state conceded that another officer, Sheriff's Deputy Bud Ghormley was first to discover the bundle.

Yet Ghormley, in turn, has been contradicted by Sheriff's



Credit: Ray Lustig

Martin Luther King Jr. — new evidence strongly suggests he was killed by members of the U.S. government.

Deputy Vernon Dollahite. Dollahite, now chief of detectives, insisted that he was the first onto Main Street and first to see the bundle. Dollahite has been consistent in his story from the beginning. After one of his early FBI interviews, they calculated that the time he took from the shot being fired to his arrival on Main Street was 1 minute 57 seconds.

The extraordinary factor in Dollahite's testimony is that though alert for anything unusual as he raced around the corner onto Main Street, he not only missed the Mustang pulling away, he did not even see the bundle with the rifle in it. Only after he had entered Jim's Grill beneath the rooming house, told everyone to stay put, and come out again, did he spot it lying in a doorway a few yards away. He and the FBI agreed that whomever was about to dump the bundle had probably seen him coming, hidden behind the staircase door until he had gone into the grill, then run out onto the street throwing down the bundle while Deputy Dollahite was inside.

There is an obvious problem with this scenario. How could Ray run out of the doorway, throw down the incriminating bundle, and then manage to climb into a white Mustang and drive off unnoticed within the seconds it took Dollahite to emerge from Jim's Grill just feet away?

The judge at the evidentiary hearing took more than a year to conclude that Ray had no grounds for a retrial. The defendant's guilt or innocence was immaterial to the issue at hand, he said.

Spying on King

By 1977, with the revelations by the Church Committee of major abuses by U.S. intelligence agencies, public opinion about the political assassinations of the 1960s had reached such heights that Congress was forced into forming the House Select Committee on Assassinations to investigate the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

Beset with political problems and threats to its funding, the HSCA nonetheless did manage to address, if inconclusively and frequently inadequately, the majority of the issues and points raised by critics of the official story in the King case. Its final report dated March 29, 1979 concluded that James Earl Ray was indeed guilty of killing Martin Luther King Jr. but that there had been co-conspirators after all. An informant's report in the FBI's St. Louis office, previously overlooked, led to the discovery that a \$50,000 bounty for the death of Martin Luther King Jr. had been offered in that city in 1967.¹⁴

However, blaming the King assassination on a conspiracy of St. Louis organized crime figures, with Ray acting as the killer, leaves many disturbing questions unanswered. One of these questions is, how could Ray simply walk into a predominantly black section of Memphis teeming with police, informants, and undercover agents, shoot King and then leave unmolested? The extent of the police surveillance on King was remarkable and the notion that Ray shot King and escaped undetected is even more remarkable. Recently, the true nature and extraordinary extent of the official presence in Memphis in April 1968 became clear.

Retired Memphis police officer Sam Evans confirmed that King's chauffeur and the manager of the Lorraine Motel were paid police informants. It is also known that Marrell McCoullough, one of the first to reach King's fallen body, although ostensibly a member of the radical black group, the Invaders, was in fact an undercover agent of the Memphis Police Department.¹⁵

The so-called Intelligence Unit of the Memphis Police

Retired Memphis police officer Sam Evans confirmed that King's chauffeur and the manager of the Lorraine Motel were paid police informants.

Department (MPD) had been planting bugs and agents at all the strategy meetings of the sanitation workers and the Invaders. Nevertheless, they continue to deny having had any source, human or electronic, at the heart of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (the group King headed) that day. A

senior police officer claimed that military intelligence and the U.S. Secret Service had also deployed agents throughout Memphis.¹⁶

It is now known that a member of the SCLC and leaders of the local NAACP were in the pay of the FBI. And another figure close to the SCLC—Jay Richard Kennedy—had been reporting his fears of communist control over King to the CIA.¹⁷

Despite the presence of numerous people engaged in the surveillance of King, apparently not one of them spotted the assassin arriving, shooting Dr. King, or escaping the scene.

Given that the Memphis Police Department had in the past provided extensive security for Dr. King on previous visits and was aware of the vulnerability of the Lorraine Motel, it seems incredible that a contingent of police bodyguards assigned to King on his arrival should have been removed the day of the shooting, apparently without the knowledge of the police chief, Frank Holloman.

Just two hours before the assassination the MPD's patrolling "TAC Units," each comprising three cars, were pulled back five blocks from the vicinity of the Lorraine Motel. Police chief Holloman claimed that he did not know of that decision until afterwards. Inspector Sam Evans, who was in charge of the units, denied that they were pulled back, even though it is now an acknowledged matter of public record.¹⁸

Furthermore, immediately after the shooting, no "All Points Bulletin" was issued which might have ensured that the major escape routes out of Memphis were sealed. No satisfactory explanation has ever been provided for that failure.

In another bizarre incident, on the day of the assassination, an erroneous message was delivered by a Secret Service agent to the Memphis Police headquarters stating that there had been a death threat against a black police detective. The detective, Ed Redditt, was stationed at a surveillance post next to the Lorraine Motel. Shortly after the first message, a corrected message arrived saying that the threat was a hoax but the police intelligence officer who received it nevertheless, went to where Detective Redditt was stationed and ordered him to go home. This was two hours before the assassination. Why did the intelligence officer send Redditt home even

14. Final Report of the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations (hereafter referred to as the *HSCA Report*) (New York: Bantam, 1979).

15. This was not revealed by investigators in 1968 but was acknowledged by the HSCA after writers like Mark Lane and Dick Gregory had drawn attention to it. See Mark Lane and Dick Gregory, *Codename Zorro: The Murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Pocketbooks, 1977).

16. Interview with investigative journalist Wayne Chastin in June 1989.

17. This information was revealed in documents released under the Freedom of Information Act and published by David Garrow in *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Penguin, 1983). It was also discussed by Kennedy for the first time on camera in an interview conducted in June 1989.

18. This point of fact was established in the HSCA investigation. However, when interviewed in June 1989, Sam Evans continued to deny it.

though he knew the threat to be false? When we approached the officer, who has now left the police force, he refused to be interviewed.¹⁹

Some of these circumstances are explained by the police as a series of coincidences, errors, and oversights. Some are not explained at all. While the HSCA's final report fell short of accusing the police of complicity in the assassination, it lambasted the Memphis Police Department for incompetence and latent racism.

Perhaps the HSCA's final conclusion would have been different if it had obtained undoctored intelligence reports from the Memphis Police Department. While doing research for his book "The Murkin Conspiracy," Philip Melanson, obtained an MPD intelligence report regarding the King assassination. When he compared it to the same report published by the HSCA, he found that all the footnotes and most of the references to undercover police agents in Memphis had been deleted from the HSCA version. Numerous paragraphs were missing and certain sentences were rewritten to play up the violent nature of Memphis civil rights activists and strikers.²⁰ Why didn't the HSCA get the originals? When confronted with this discrepancy, Representative Louis Stokes (Dem.-Ohio), the former Chair of the HSCA, admitted that he did not know that the Memphis Police Department had provided the Committee with altered documents.²¹

The Role of the FBI

It is also enlightening to look at FBI actions both prior to and after the King assassination. Former Atlanta FBI agent Arthur Murtagh has given some indication of the prevailing mood at the Bureau in King's home city.

Murtagh related in an interview that "Me and a colleague were checking out for the day when the news came over the radio that Dr. King had been shot. My colleague leapt up, clapped his hands and said 'Goddamn, we got him! We finally got him.' " When asked if he was sure of this statement, Murtagh was adamant that his colleague said "we," not "they."²²

For years, through its COINTELPRO operations, the FBI had been spying on, bugging, falsifying letters, and sowing discontent among the leadership of the SCLC in an attempt to discredit and "neutralize" Dr. King.²³

Suddenly, after the King assassination, the FBI began what was called the greatest, most expensive inquiry in Bureau history—the hunt for King's killer. All the technical and human resources of Hoover's FBI focused on the bundle of evidence conveniently left behind at the crime scene—a bundle which pointed only to one man—Eric Galt, a.k.a. John Willard, a.k.a. Paul Bridgman, a.k.a. George Sneyd, whose real name is James Earl Ray. At the same time, white racist groups braced themselves for an FBI assault, but to their astonishment no

one asked them any questions. "It was strange," recalled white supremacist J.B. Stoner, "[It was] almost as if they knew they didn't have to look this way."²⁴

The HSCA, like the Justice Department which had already conducted an investigation into the FBI's handling of the King assassination, found no evidence of a coverup. In the end, the Committee did conclude that the Bureau had contributed to a moral climate conducive to the murder of Dr. King, but it stopped short of accusing the Bureau of actual involvement in the killing.²⁵

Evidence nonetheless exists suggesting that elements within the FBI may have played a significant role in the political assassination. Consider, for instance, Myron Billett's story.



Credit: S. McCarthy

Myron Billett said he heard U.S. intelligence agents propose the King assassination to Mafia leaders.

In early 1968, Myron Billett was the trusted chauffeur of Mafia chief Sam Giancana. Giancana asked Billett to drive him, and fellow mobster Carlos Gambino, to a meeting at a motel in upstate New York. Other major Mafia figures from New York were there as well as three men who were introduced as representatives from the CIA and FBI. There were a number of subjects on the agenda, including Castro's Cuba.²⁶

According to Billett, one of the government agents offered the mobsters a million dollars for the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Billett stated that Sam Giancana replied, "Hell no, not after you screwed up the Kennedy deal like that." As far as Billett knows, no one took up the offer.

Billett relayed this information in an interview conducted just weeks before he died of emphysema. Given his condition, there appears to be no particular reason for him to lie. While his allegations are mentioned in the HSCA's final report, it makes no judgment as to their validity—the HSCA report simply states that it was unable to corroborate his story.

24. Interview with J.B. Stoner, Atlanta Georgia, April 1989.

25. *Op. cit.*, n. 14.

26. Interview with Myron Billett, Columbus Ohio, June 1989.

19. See G. Frank, *An American Death* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

20. *Op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 80.

21. Interview with Representative Louis Stokes, Washington, D.C., June 1989.

22. Interview with Arthur Murtagh, June 1989.

23. See Garrow, *op. cit.*, n. 17; also see HSCA report.

also from my list pages false

There is another instance in which FBI agents were heard discussing bounties and the recruitment of professionals to kill King. In September 1965, Clifton Baird, a Louisville, Kentucky policeman was informed by fellow officer Arlie Blair of a \$500,000 offer to kill Dr. King. Louisville was the home of King's brother, the Reverend A.D. King. Baird said he overheard other police officers and several FBI officers discussing the contract. The next day, Baird tape-recorded Blair referring to the contract again. Later, the HSCA heard the tape and verified its authenticity.²⁷

FBI agent William Duncan, liaison with the Louisville Police, admitted that the discussion had taken place and named two other agents who would confirm it. But he also claimed the offer was initiated as a joke by police Sergeant William Baker. Both of the other FBI agents denied any knowledge of the conversation and Baker had died. The HSCA ran out of leads.²⁸

There are also witnesses afraid to discuss what really happened on the day of the assassination due to continuing harassment and intimidation. For example, ever since a black Tennessee grocery store owner named John McFerren first told his story, he has been threatened, burgled, beaten up, and shot at. Now he is very reluctant to tell it again.

On the afternoon of the assassination, McFerren was at a Memphis produce store when he overheard the store's manager say on the phone "Get him on the balcony, you can pick up the money from my brother in New Orleans and don't call me here again." The man on the phone was Frank Liberto. His brother, Sal, who lived in New Orleans, was associated with Mafia kingpin Carlos Marcello. As incredible as it seems, the FBI did not pursue McFerren's allegation after they initially questioned Liberto and he denied it.²⁹

my story

These connections, and other evidence that members of the Mob were involved in the assassination, were discovered by investigative reporter Bill Sartor. While doing research for a book, Sartor had gone undercover and infiltrated the peripheries of both the Memphis and the New Orleans Mafia. Sartor died mysteriously in Texas as he was completing his first draft and two autopsies failed to reveal the cause of death.

There are other Memphis locals, particularly in the vicinity of the Lorraine Motel and Jim's Grill, who are still afraid to talk or who have suddenly changed their original stories. At least one of them is still visited from time to time by a man reminding him to stay silent. There is also the allegation that someone posing as an advance security person appeared at

27. *Op. cit.*, n. 14.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Interview with John McFerren, Memphis, Tennessee, June 1989. It should be noted that because McFerren is terrified of retribution, he refuses to be interviewed on camera.

the Lorraine Motel two days before the assassination and ordered Dr. King's room changed from the ground floor to the first. Finally there was the known presence in Memphis on the day of the assassination as well as a week after, of a notorious anti-Castro mercenary and CIA contract employee. Years later, when questioned about why he was in Memphis on the day of the assassination, he admitted "it was my business to be there."

The CIA and False Identities

It is not disputed that the CIA took a very active interest in Martin Luther King Jr. Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal an extensive and ongoing CIA scrutiny of the thoughts, actions, and associates of the civil rights leader throughout the 1960s. One of those reporting back to the CIA was Jay R. Kennedy, a writer and broadcaster prominent in the civil rights movement. Kennedy fervently believed that King's opposition to the war in Vietnam was orchestrated by Peking-line communist agents.

There are other compelling questions about the complicity of the CIA in the King assassination. For example, although James Earl Ray never visited Toronto before April 1968, he

used four identities belonging to individuals living within a few miles of each other in that city. Each of the four bears a rough physical resemblance to Ray. Of these the most elaborate alias was that of Eric Galt, a name Ray used extensively through the period before the assassination. Only on April 4th, the day of the assassination, did he abandon Galt's name and begin to use the other three.³⁰

The Galt alias was not merely the result of a fraudulently obtained birth certificate—it was the wholesale usurping of the real Eric Galt's history and physical identity. Evidence shows that James Earl Ray had travelled in the same U.S. cities as the Canadian Eric Galt, had access to Galt's signature, and even inquired into emigrating to southern Africa—a place where Eric Galt had relatives.³¹ Moreover Ray has scars on his forehead and his hand, as does the real Eric Galt. Two months before the assassination Ray had plastic surgery on his nose. Galt revealed that he, too, had had plastic surgery on his nose.

Eric Galt is, moreover, an expert marksman.

The question arises: How could Ray or his co-conspirators acquire such a detailed profile of this alter ego? According to Eric Galt, there is only one place where all the pertinent information is collected together—his highly classified security clearance file in the Union Carbide factory in Toronto where, in the mid-1960s, he was working on a top secret U.S. defense

30. Interview with Ray, *op. cit.*, n. 9.

31. See William Bradford Huie, *He Slew the Dragon* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1970).

project.³²

Fletcher Prouty, a former Pentagon colonel and author of "The Secret Team," was responsible for providing military support for CIA covert operations in the early 1960s. Prouty finds these revelations highly significant:³³

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) [which at that time included the Canadian equivalent of the CIA] would have compiled this file and besides them and Union Carbide, the only people with access to it would have been U.S. intelligence.

The question of how Ray came to acquire these identities provided the original link to Jules Ron Kimble, the man who has confessed to us that he aided Ray in the assassination.

Who is Raoul?

Ray claims that the mysterious "Raoul" hired him to carry out assignments in Montreal in late July 1967. This sparked an interest in *Toronto Star* reporter Andre Salwyn, who sought corroboration to this claim after Ray's arrest. Salwyn conducted an exhaustive search of the neighborhood in which Ray had allegedly been seen drinking with an American stranger. He found that there had indeed been a man with similar characteristics to Ray's description of Raoul living there at different times during the previous year. He was known as Jules "Rico" Kimble and was said by his girlfriend to have had a car with rifles in the trunk and a radio tuned into the police band. Salwyn checked phone records and discovered that Kimble regularly contacted numbers in New Orleans.³⁴

But the phone numbers disappeared, and Salwyn was never allowed to pursue the story. The HSCA did manage to come across Kimble ten years later and they investigated. They found an FBI file on him; and a CIA file; and an RCMP file.

Joe Oster, a Louisiana state investigator, conducted extensive surveillance of Kimble in 1967, and claims that there is a week in July 1967 when nobody can account for Kimble's whereabouts.³⁵ This is the period in which Ray claims to have met "Raoul" in Montreal.

When interviewed in 1967, Kimble claimed to have been a low-level CIA courier and pilot.³⁶ When we talked to him from prison, Kimble confirmed that he had worked for the CIA as well as organized crime and also made the following allegations:³⁷

- He claims that the HSCA did know all about his role in the assassination (more even than he could remember), producing documents, photographs, and files which proved his association with James Earl Ray, an association he then admitted. However, all files relating to the HSCA investigation have been sealed for 50 years.

32. Interview with Eric Galt, Toronto Canada, June 1989.

33. Interview with Fletcher Prouty, Alexandria, Va, June 1989.

34. Salwyn testified before the House Select Committee on Assassinations; see also, Melanson, *op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 44.

35. *Op. cit.*, n. 6.

36. Statement to Garrison, *op. cit.*, n. 7.

37. *Op. cit.*, n. 1.

- Kimble also stated that on the orders of a Louisiana FBI agent, he flew James Earl Ray from Atlanta to Montreal in July 1967 where Ray was provided with an identities package by a CIA specialist in Mont Royal, Montreal. An ex-CIA agent with knowledge of Agency operations in Canada in the 1960s recently confirmed in an off-the-record interview that there was an Agency "asset" specializing in "identities" in Montreal in 1967. His name was Raoul Maora.
- Kimble said that he then accompanied Ray to a CIA training camp in Three Rivers, Canada where Ray was taught to shoot. It was there that the two men were seen together by Kimble's former girlfriend.
- At the same time, an assassination team was assembled to kill King. Kimble claims that he flew two snipers into Memphis using a West Memphis airfield belonging to a CIA front company. He said that the only involvement that Ray had in the assassination was to serve as a decoy.



Credit: S. McCarthy

Eric Galt discussing how Ray might have gotten information from his classified personnel file.

- Finally, Jules Kimble stated that elements of the Memphis Police Department did cooperate in the assassination but that the actual operation was coordinated by a high-ranking intelligence official based in Atlanta.

What is the validity of Kimble's assertions? The evidence presented here, and the many questions it raises, suggests one thing: Those responsible for the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. have yet to be caught and convicted of this political assassination. There is strong evidence that shows agents within the U.S. intelligence apparatus could have played a major role in King's murder. If that is the case, then the U.S. government could be guilty of not only covering up details of the assassination, but of the murder itself. The only way to answer these questions is through a complete and thorough investigation. The documents from the HSCA should be unsealed and a new probe begun. It is long past time for that to happen. ●