

2. Alleged Conspiracies

OPR

Literally scores of alleged conspiracies were communicated to the Bureau. From the date of the assassination in April, 1968, even up to this date, the FBI has been approached by numerous persons with stories which purport to identify a conspiracy to kill King. These stories involved the widest range of perpetrators and participants as well as motives. To the extent that these leads were pursued, the Bureau was put in the rather difficult position of conducting an investigation which ranged far beyond the concrete evidence that had already been obtained. When the leads were in fact bogus ones, the FBI was attempting to prove a negative in each reported case. With a controversial figure, such as Dr. King, the possibilities of conspiracy were numerous. Consequently, the Bureau's credibility would necessarily be strained, given its past relationship with the civil rights leader, unless each story was disproved. Yet the Bureau attempted to cover each lead.

As previously stated, each SAC was held personally responsible for an expedited and thorough review.

Based on our review of the files, the task force is satisfied that the FBI did a credible and thorough job in attempting to identify any possible conspiracy or persons who could have been involved in the murder. In each of the allegations received, the Bureau immediately interviewed the person who was the source of the allegation where this was possible (i.e. where the source was not anonymous). In situations where the complaint was not an obvious hoax the Bureau then attempted immediately to identify the alleged participants and interview them. Where there was not a satisfactory explanation to dispel the allegation concerning such matters as whereabouts or associations, the Bureau then would check further. This does not mean that every allegation was pursued to the ultimate degree. Judgment based on experience dictated many of the decisions.

These judgments were also tempered by a critical factor. Within fifteen days after the murder, the FBI was convinced that Galt and Ray were the same person, that this individual purchased the rifle, rented the room across from the Lorraine Motel, and fired the shot that killed Dr. King. While there were many other people

who were antagonistic toward Dr. King and many who had apparently discussed killing him, any successful conspiracy would have to have involved Ray based on the evidence at hand. In all the years following the assassination, the investigation has failed to reveal any connection between any alleged conspirator(s) and James Earl Ray including those alleged by Ray himself. Indeed, the overwhelming evidence indicates that Ray was almost totally alone during the year after his escape from the Missouri State Prison.

We have not addressed here the Bureau's handling of particular conspiracy leads because of the large number of allegations involved. Bureau files can be checked for each reported lead and the resulting investigation on that lead traced to its conclusion.