

Jack Anderson's

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Washington-Merry-Go-Round

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With Les Whitten

WASHINGTON — House investigators have uncovered dramatic new evidence that the accused killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. may not have acted alone.

The murder was pinned on James Earl Ray, an escaped convict, who used phony passports to slip out of the country. According to the investigators, he got as far as Portugal, where he received "further instructions" from a secret conspirator.

Ray finally was tracked down in London and extradited to the United States for trial. His activities in Portugal, meanwhile, have been concealed from the authorities for eight years.

Not until a few weeks ago did the House investigators learn about Ray's Portugal connection from "a witness who had never previously been interviewed by any investigative agency."

The investigators reported this startling development confidentially to the Select Committee on Assassinations. "Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions," they disclosed cautiously in a preliminary report.

They didn't mention in the report where the contact was made, except that it was "out of the United States." We have established that the location was Portugal.

The investigators also have uncovered some intriguing new information about Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy.

According to the report, the committee staff "spent seven hours questioning an ex-CIA agent who had come forth to relate his personal knowledge of the contents of conversations between Lee Harvey Oswald and personnel within the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City."

Oswald's conversations, according to our sources, were monitored by the Central Intelligence Agency. Immediately, staff members "were dispatched to Mexico City where they conducted further interviews," the report discloses. No evidence has been uncovered so far, however, that Oswald discussed the Kennedy assassination at either embassy.

The committee will probe deeply into any connection between the CIA and Kennedy's assassination. The agency, we have learned, has more than 60 cartons of top-secret documents "relating to the assassination of

President John F. Kennedy and the activities of Lee Harvey Oswald prior to that assassination."

Meanwhile, the committee staff is anxiously awaiting congressional approval of their request for a record \$6.5 million to investigate the assassinations. Behind closed doors, Richard Sprague, the panel's brilliant staff director from Philadelphia, dramatically laid out his plans, and persuaded even the most stubborn members of the committee that the money was necessary.

Sprague pointed out that, compared to other investigations, the money he wanted was not an unreasonable sum. For example, he noted that for the first three-month period of the search for Patty Hearst, the FBI spent \$2.6 million.

In addition, Sprague explained, the New York state investigation of abuse in the Medicaid program has a budget of \$6 million for its second year.

Rep. Henry Gonzales, D-Tex., the incoming chairman of the assassination committee, told us he is convinced that Sprague is right.

CONFLICT CURBS: President-elect Jimmy Carter, armed with an unpublished survey showing that employees are abysmally ignorant of conflict-of-interest laws, plans to make an executive order on the problem one of his first orders of business.

According to the survey, prepared by Ralph Nader's Center for Law and Social Policy, the conflict laws are so complex that employees can't understand them.

In fact, the employees told the Nader interviewers, the legal terminology is "so boring and burdensome" that they sign federal job agreements without even reading the regulations.

Some agencies, states the report, don't even bother to provide workers with the written laws. Instead, the employees receive quick oral briefings.

Incredibly, federal agencies do not remind employees about potential conflicts when they leave the government. The burden is on the worker to determine if taking a new job is illegal.

As a result, top government executives are caught in a revolving door between business and government, which moves so fast it is difficult to distinguish the watchdogs from those who are being watched. In some cases, regulators break the law by quickly accepting jobs in the industries they were regulating.