

Ray in Prison, but Questions Remain

Examiner News Services

NASHVILLE (Tenn.) — Jame Earl Ray arrived at the state penitentiary today to begin serving his 99-year term less than 24 hours after pleading guilty to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

Ray was processed before entering a lonely six by nine feet cell in the maximum security building.

He was transported to the prison under heavy security from Memphis, 200 miles away, during the early morning hours.

Meanwhile, the widow of Dr. King Jr., said his slaying was the work of more than one person and is still on the

conscience of the nation despite the sentencing of Ray.

The Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, who took over leadership of Dr. King's civil rights organization, says he is convinced by Ray's admission of guilt itself that the murder was part of a conspiracy.

"There are the unanswered questions," comments author William Bradford Huie, who wrote Ray's biography while Ray was awaiting trial on murder charge.

But while these and other dissenting voices were being heard District Attorney Philip M. Canale reiterated at a post sentencing interview

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last night the state had uncovered no evidence at all of conspiracy.

Canale said the sums of money Ray spent hopping around the United States and Canada and finally to Europe, which seemed to some suspiciously large, probably came from the assassin's own efforts as a smuggler and holdup man.

Ray "got money from several sources," Canale said, and saved a "fairly substantial sum of money while in prison" in Missouri before the escape that led ultimately to King's death by a rifle bullet on the balcony of a Memphis motel.

Canale said his investigators believed Ray mailed the money out of the prison before he escaped.

He added that the investigators believe Ray obtained funds in "one armed robbery and maybe two robberies in Montreal," one in London, and profited by smuggling jewelry and drugs into the United States after his prison break.

Confusion

Ray's statements in court yesterday confused many

who heard them.

After entering his plea of guilty to first-degree murder he stood up and told the judge he disagreed with the theory no conspiracy was linked with the assassination.

Under questioning by the court, however, Ray said he was still pleading guilty.

'Many Fingers'

A Justice Department spokesman in Washington said Ray's plea of guilty had not closed the books on its original investigation of a possible conspiracy.

In Atlanta, Coretta King, the widow, said Ray's plea of guilty "cannot be allowed to close the case, to end the search for the many fingers which helped pull the trigger.

"For the moment, we have been spared a trial which would compel us to relieve the fearfully tragic events of his death. But we realize that this is but a respite."

But, Mrs. King continued: "All concerned people must press the State of Tennessee and the U.S. government to continue until all who are responsible for this crime are apprehended."

"Not until then," the widow said, "can the conscience of the nation rest."

Questions

The Rev. Abernathy said he had thought all along that the slaying was the outcome of a conspiracy and was more convinced than ever after hearing of Ray's performance in court.

"The trial," said Ray's biographer, Huie, "went according to script.

"I'm not surprised that Ray got up in court and said



REV. ABERNATHY
Asks further probe

what he did about a conspiracy. He's said all along there was another man in the rooming house from which the shot was fired.

"And there are the unanswered questions."

Reaction

Commenting on the persistent conspiracy suspicions, Judge W. Preston Battle Jr., who presided at the hearing, had this to say:

"While it is not always the case, my 35 years in these criminal courts have convinced me that in the great majority of cases, Hamlet was right when he said: 'For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.'"

The judge said no proof of a conspiracy sufficient to indict anybody but Ray had been found, but noted:

"Of course, this is not conclusive evidence that there was no conspiracy." And he pointed out that "in this state there is no statute of limitations in capital cases such as this" if evidence turns up against somebody else later.

No Answers

Those who clung to a conspiracy theory still were

vexed by many questions. For example:

- How did Ray pay his way?

- Where did he get the estimated \$10,000 he spent between the time he escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary in April, 1967, until he was captured in London last June 8?

- How did Ray pick the rooming house from where the fatal shot was fired, across the street from the motel, and how did he know the best vantage point would be from a hallway bathroom window?

- How did Ray know that King would stay at the Lorraine, operated by Negroes, instead of the white-operated Rivermont, where he had stayed previously?

- How did he know King would be on the balcony?

- If there were no conspiracy, as the state contends, why did Ray plead guilty?